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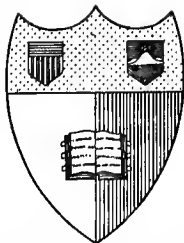
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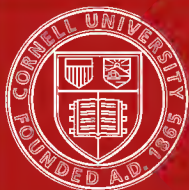
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A MARRIAGE IN CHINA

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A

# MARRIAGE IN CHINA

BY

MRS. ARCHIBALD LITTLE

(A. E. N. BEWICKE)

'I am become a perfect epicure in reading; plain beef or solid mutton will never do. I am for a Chinese dish of bears' claws and birds' nests.'

GOLDSMITH'S 'Citizen of the World.'

LONDON

F. V. WHITE & CO.

14 BEDFORD STREET, STRAND, W.C.

1896

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## PREFACE

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To those Consuls and Commissioners of Chinese Customs who have shown me kindness in China, this book is jointly dedicated.

Some of them may feel surprise on meeting therein other men arbitrarily promoted to the posts they themselves occupy, but no one of them need fear being confronted by his own portrait or caricature, either in his own Consulate or Commissionership, or elsewhere; though here and there he may find a composite photograph recalling this one by his learning, that one by his courtesy.

As they remember but too well, the Riots whereof mention is made did in reality take place: 1889, February, Chinkiang; 1891, May 12, Wuhu; May 25, Attempt at Nanking; June 5, Wusüeh; June 7, Attempt at Kiu-kiang; September 2, Ichang. That no explanation is given of these outbreaks, neither why they occurred, nor why they ceased, nor who directed them in their goodly ordering, is because, if known to any of these gentlemen, it is a secret so far locked within his breast.

If some find there be something too little said of merchants, let it be remembered that it is missionaries rather than merchants who have so far found facilities in

the last ports opened by British diplomacy. Whilst if others think something too much of Taoism doth herein appear, was it not a Commissioner who said, 'For one Chinese missionaries convert, I wonder how many Europeans are converted by the Chinese!'

With which words I take leave of these high officials in European and Chinese employ, begging them to commend my pages to that public that they serve, and wishing them quick promotion and much happiness in the old home and the new!

ALICIA BEWICKE LITTLE.

CHUNGKING : 1893.

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A

# MARRIAGE IN CHINA

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## CHAPTER I

### THE OLD HOME

I can recall so well how she would look—  
How at the very murmur of her dress  
On entering the door, the whole room took  
An air of gentleness.

That was so long ago, and yet his eyes  
Had always, afterwards, the look that waits  
And yearns and waits again, nor can disguise  
Something it contemplates.

C. B. GOING.

THE little drawing-room looked out through two windows, one a well-rounded bow, on to a quiet garden, shut in by a high brick wall, except where the long, narrow greenhouse, projecting almost at right angles from the drawing-room, occupied one side of it. Needless to say, there was a mountain ash forming a complete arbour, with its red-berried branches trailing all round, and a circular seat beneath them; and that there was no barren expanse of turf abandoned to a lawn tennis net! Lawn tennis was of another epoch from that garden, with its single dahlias, its bushes of lavender, and peonies! What turf there was was of the richest, but cut up by little old-fashioned borders of fanciful shapes, all brimful of flowers, except in one spot where a sweetbriar bush had been allowed to grow somewhat wildly, and at another where three small yew bushes had been cut into grotesque shapes, one bearing a resemblance to a lion, the others more like candlesticks than anything else. The drawing-room looked as peaceful and old-world as the garden; the roomy, comfortable sofa, and

the spindle-legged chairs, all covered with that glazed chintz with bright knots of flowers that even Morris and cretonnes have not quite abolished ; the pictures on the walls of ladies and gentlemen in powder and heavy gold frames, the gentlemen wearing blue coats, the ladies snuff-coloured gowns, all but one—if not by Romney, then after Romney—in a figured chintz. There was an old blue china bowl in the middle of the round table—itsself, as in the old style, religiously placed in the middle of the room—and the bowl was brimming over with wallflowers, yellow and dusky red. And beside the wallflowers, looking like a monthly rosebud of long ago, sat Miss Gardiner, with a bright pink colour on her dear old cheeks, against which the grey curls were pinned tightly, and with bright blue eyes, and cap with pink bows and floating pink strings, that all alike seem to have gone out of fashion together, and left the world perhaps more æsthetic, but certainly less cheery. She wore some not very fine white lace about her throat and bosom, secured by a brooch of tiger's claws, as she sat leaning against the back of her chair, but in a somewhat upright, alert fashion, with her hands lightly folded on her lap, evidently making company of the lady who occupied the post of honour on the sofa ; a lady all in black silk, lace trimmed, but loose fitting, with dark eyes and hair, and a settled redness on her face. 'He is somewhere in China, you know, my dear sister's son. I don't recollect exactly where. It did end in 'ow, I know, and it is not Shanghai. But he goes there from time to time. Everyone in China seems to pass through Shanghai to go anywhere. It is evidently quite a centre, though you would not think so to look at the map,' added Miss Gardiner, nodding her head with the air of imparting information she was somewhat proud of possessing.

The lady on the sofa bowed slightly, as if accepting it.

'You did not know I had a nephew in China ?' continued Miss Gardiner. 'Such a dear, dear fellow ! No ! not a missionary, nor in business ; something in the Consular Service. I do not know exactly what he is called now. He is not a consul exactly, and he is not an interpreter any longer. So curious, they always set them to interpret when they first arrive in China, when you would think the young men themselves stood rather in need of help in that way. Such a specially difficult language as it is, too, as Claude says. He brought me those two dear old monsters by the fireplace last time he came home, and that lovely bit of *sang de bœuf* he sent me from

Peking. Oh ! and that cushion, and my brooch, and nearly everything I have that is not strictly useful. Though so practical a people, the Chinese do not seem to make things for use,' said the dear old lady, again nodding her head, proud of her information.

'Claude?' said the other lady interrogatively, and her face wore an air of having known it from the first, and yet being somewhat additionally depressed, when Miss Gardiner, all smiles and animation, said :

'Yes ! Claude Fortescue, that is my dear boy's name. My sister married Captain Fortescue on his return from India—on his return from India,' she repeated musingly. 'He did not live many years, and my sister died just before Claude went out to China. It was almost as well, it would have been such a great grief to her. But then, I suppose, he would not have gone. To let you into a little secret, I think he was very sorry to have to go back to China this time, he seemed so greatly taken with your niece—cousin, I mean. Not that he proposed,' said Miss Gardiner, blushing. 'I certainly thought he would have, but I feel sure he did not, or Lilian would have told me of it. But he was certainly greatly taken.'

A girl's figure had been visible in the greenhouse for the last few minutes, and she now came into the room, a young girl in a pale green and white dress, a large straw hat, that had fallen back from off her head, still tied round her throat. Very young and very pretty, yet the first thing every stranger noticed about Lilian Grey was rather her high-bred air and carriage than her beauty. With a dainty grace, that was an inherent part of herself, she now offered the first pink of the season to the dark lady ; then, seeing the two elders apparently absorbed in their conversation, passed out by the open window as noiselessly as she had come in.

Mrs. Betterton had indeed the air of being very much preoccupied, as she accepted with some bewilderment the flower the young girl offered with such a pretty gesture.

'Of course she was very young—very, very young,' said Miss Gardiner. 'And perhaps he thought he had not enough to offer. Marriage is so expensive,' she added with a sigh.

'Is it?' said Mrs. Betterton somewhat grimly.

'Why, surely to keep two is so much more expensive than to keep one,' said the maiden lady, flushing a little. 'And then—and then——'

'It depends upon the style in which a man thinks it

necessary for his wife to live,' said the dark lady, saying each word as if it cost her an effort to think of it, and was in no case the word she had at first intended using.

'Ah, yes! And I dare say dear Claude would think great style necessary. He is so fastidious, nothing short of the best would ever satisfy him.'

The dark lady's face from red grew almost purple, before she said, somewhat as if cutting the subject short: 'You did not know that I have lived in China, I believe. Yes, that is the reason you have never heard of me before, nor Lilian, since she was quite a little girl. I knew your nephew out there. The house he was occupying there is not generally reckoned one of the best in the Consular Service. It would hardly be possible to think of anyone living in great style in it. No, he is not likely to be there still, I should think. At least I hope not, for his sake. They do not generally keep them too long in one place when they appoint them to a very lonely outpost. It is too severe a trial, I suppose they think.' All of this hesitatingly, and in answer to various eager questions from the bright-faced maiden aunt. And yet the same Mrs. Betterton, who had such difficulty in expressing herself about this young man in the Consular Service, was at no loss for an answer when asked if missionaries were doing good work in China, or what were the prospects of China becoming a Christian country. To be sure, no one had ever yet talked to her for more than ten minutes since she returned to England without asking her at least these two rather far-reaching questions; so she had practice in replying to them. But this same woman, who could barely string two stuttering sentences together about a young consular official, had made herself felt at the great Exeter Hall meeting two nights before, when some of the most eloquent men of England had been among the speakers.

'Have you any reason to think that—that—Miss Grey was attracted by Mr. Fortescue?' she now asked, after a somewhat gloomy silence.

'How could she be otherwise?' said the old maiden lady with a sweet smile. 'He is so very, very nice, is he not? And then he was the first gentleman who had ever paid her any attentions. Of course I try that Lilian should have all the advantages. But we live very quietly here. And not even at the one or two balls she has since been to can she have met anyone more cultivated and attractive than Claude.'

And then, when he was last home, she had been nowhere. That must have been the reason, I think. He must have thought it hardly fair to bind her. For he certainly paid her every attention, and I don't it is *quite* the act of a gentleman to do that—and to do no more,' said poor Miss Gardiner a little plaintively.

'We must never judge lightly of one another's actions,' said Mrs. Betterton, with what seemed an unnecessary degree of solemnity. 'Very often—if we knew all—just what we are most inclined to condemn would be what we should most approve. "There lives a righteous Judge——"'

Miss Gardiner looked impressed, and also greatly relieved. So sympathetic a nature had not failed to be pained that one who knew her nephew in China should yet refrain from all word of praise of him to his old aunt in England; but now, at the first word of semi-censure to which she had nerved herself, thinking the other might be biassed by some apprehension of wrong done to her relation, Lilian, Mrs. Betterton dissented with energy. Miss Gardiner returned to the opinion to which she had inclined from the beginning, that Mrs. Betterton was a stern, hard woman, too just to censure, whilst too unloving to praise. She could picture to herself how her dear Claude would be sure to dislike her.

But now the tea-tray came in, and with the tea returned Lilian Grey to dispense it, which she again did with a pretty grace that had something of the old school in it. Mrs. Betterton watched her with large, dark, earnest eyes.

'I dearly loved your mother, child,' at last she said abruptly, and the tone in which she said it almost sounded as if she had struggled against that love, which had yet been too much for her.

Lilian had felt oppressed by the intense watchfulness of those dark, glowing eyes, but she looked up relieved now.

'I am like her, am I not?' she asked. 'Dear Gardie never saw her; but when I look in the glass I think I am like the little miniature I have of her.'

'You are the very image of her,' said Mrs. Betterton, 'in the way you speak and move and do everything. Your very turns of the head are all your mother's. She was my first love,' said the grim woman, smiling, 'and my darling little cousin. When she married your father and went away to Vienna I thought the light of my life had gone out.'

'You did not love my father?' asked the girl gravely, her eyes dilating somewhat, as if the idea shocked her.

'If I ever hated any man, I hated your father,' replied Mrs. Betterton with incisive firmness. 'He stole your mother's love from me, and he took her away from me. Up to that time she had looked up to me for everything. Then it was all "Harcourt"—"Harcourt says this," and "Harcourt says that," till my very heart was sick within me. He was a clever, accomplished man of the world, and a born diplomatist. What could I do against him, a raw country girl without a natural gift of any kind, only a too passionately loving heart? So I went away. And your mother married and went to Vienna. And there you were born. And there she died. And we had never made friends again after what she called my unkind opposition to her marriage. But she would not have been lying in her grave had he left her to me a little longer. But, no. I have nothing more to reproach your father with except that he took her away. And he married the Grafina——'

'That was years afterwards,' said the girl quickly.

'Oh, yes; it was years afterwards. I don't reproach him with it. And he died of yellow fever at Rio Janeiro, did he not? Poor man! poor man! he was a very high-bred gentleman. I take it there is something of him in you, too, my child. And now I must go my ways,' said Mrs. Betterton, rising. 'Here is an address that will always find me; and, if you ever want a friend, recollect that I loved your mother dearly. But it seems of so little use to say that when one is going back to China.'

'You are going *back* again?' asked Miss Gardiner in sudden awe.

'Yes, I have only come home to place my two boys at school. There is a very good school at Chefoo, in China, but I thought I should feel happier about them in England; and in reality in the west of China one is hardly nearer Chefoo than one is to England. I mean one is so far from both. Sometimes, do you know, I think life is all a mistake!' said Mrs. Betterton, fixing her glowing eyes on the young girl's face. 'If anyone had told me, when I was a girl, that your mother's daughter should be left an orphan, and I be willing to live thousands of miles away! But I have put my hand to the plough, and I dare not draw back. This sacrifice, too, must be laid at His feet that bled. The fields are ripening to the harvest in China, but the reapers are few. And since

Mr. Betterton has been taken away from among us, I feel as if I must work doubly hard. So I have brought our two boys home to be trained for the Lord's service, and the two little ones go back with me. So shall I not be forsaken of all my children, and they need a mother's care the most, the little ones. But oh! the heart hunger for my boys, and for him whose loving words of counsel are silent now till we meet again upon the other shore! Ah me! the flesh is weak, and it often seems as if that crossing might be made so quickly. It is not like the long, long journey to China. And now I am told I must not return at once, but out of the fruits of my experience raise up other workers! To do is easy,' murmured rather than spoke the devoted woman. 'To suffer—why, as soon as it is more than one can bear, friend Death comes and saves. But to speak to others! It is like pouring out my own heart's blood for them to see. And to look upon the unawakened, unprepared faces, and call upon *them* to take up the burden—that, that is terrible! But I am speaking of what you cannot understand,' she said, breaking off with a smile, as she saw the growing agitation on her hearers' faces—a gathering flush upon the gentle Miss Gardiner's cheek, whilst the girl's clear eyes seemed to be following and *seeing* every working of her mind. 'This is only to explain to you—to you both—that I am staying on in England for a while, but only as long as I can be more useful here for the mission field than if I were myself upon it among our dear Chinese. But if there ever is any way I can serve you, Lilian, for your mother's sake—And to think that but for this dear, good Miss Gardiner, you, my poor child——' She broke off again, this time quite overcome by her own emotion.

'Don't say that,' said the girl, putting her arms round her spontaneously, as she would never have thought it possible she should on first seeing her that afternoon. 'Besides, I shall always now have your love to count upon—for my dear mother's sake.'

Mrs. Betterton was greatly touched, and folded her in a passionate embrace. Then she took leave of Miss Gardiner more formally, yet still with much effusion. And then, before they had quite realised what was happening, the dark lady in the long, loose black silk jacket, clumsily shaped so as to conceal her figure, in accordance with Chinese notions of propriety, as she had already explained upon more than one missionary platform, was driving off to catch the train in that

startlingly good time that alone seems safe to people when they first arrive from the far East, taking with her the black bag that contained her Bible, and from which she never parted, but taking with her also a host of kindly feelings, such as are but seldom the creation of one afternoon's meeting.

'And I meant to have gone to the station with her, of course,' said Miss Gardiner.

'And see, she has left my beautiful clove pink behind,' said the girl, pressing it lovingly to her lips now for the sake of her to whom she had given it.

---

## CHAPTER II

### GARDIE

Golden morning and purple night,  
Life that fails with the failing light!  
Death is the only deathless one.  
All things must end that have begun.

JOHN PAYNE.

It was a very still life, that led by Miss Gardiner and Lilian Grey at Northampton, though the elder lady did try that the younger one should have 'all the advantages.' But to Lilian that old house and garden were all the home she had ever known. She could not recollect Vienna and her mother. Twice for brief periods she had stayed with her father and his second wife; for the rest, she had been either at school or with Miss Gardiner. And now for over a year she had left school and lived continuously with Miss Gardiner, carrying on her studies, and enjoying what little society came in her way, but taking this latter as a rule very lightly, never having been told yet to regard it as the serious business of a woman's life, and not being herself of a nature ever to conceive such an idea unaided. She was very fond of the old doctor who came in for a cup of tea whenever he happened to be passing late in the afternoon; very deferential to a very old gentleman, a lawyer, who lived hard by—Northampton is somewhat celebrated for its old people; not particularly friendly with any girl of her own age, and not at all particularly interested in the various partners who had danced with her at the two or three balls to which she had been taken. Truth to tell, the



matter that had most interested her at those balls had been her own dress. To the young and inexperienced girl the shimmering silver and gossamer white had seemed too lovely for any human being to wear. Then she had gone to her first ball, and seen others wearing like lovely garments as if they had always done so—were to the manner born; but a feeling of reverence for her own dress had remained with her to the end, for she could not help recollecting how very different and how very simple all her other frocks had always been. There was also a pearl necklace round her throat that had been her mother's, and that even Miss Gardiner had warned her to be careful of, it was so valuable. And Lilian moved about even more daintily than usual, careful not to disarrange a frilling, much less lose a pearl. When people paid her compliments her eyes dilated a little with a faint smile, but she was in no way gratified, neither did she blush. How could anyone help looking well in such a lovely dress? was all she thought as she danced her best, just as if she were at a dancing school, but with no further thought of her partners, nor any realisation that she was reckoned the beauty of the ball, and that everyone was talking of her as an heiress as well.

Before that there had come the one event of surprising interest into her life: Miss Gardiner's nephew in China had come home to Northampton on leave. Lilian had always thought of him beforehand as a pudding-faced boy, possibly because some one else's nephew had turned out to be such. So when she had heard that he was coming home by way of Siberia, which Miss Gardiner grieved over because it would so shorten his time in England, she had taken no interest, only always agreed with 'Gardie,' as she called her, that it was a great pity, because she knew the old lady thought it so. Then when a man over six foot had arrived, very thin, with stooping shoulders, and clothes that hung upon them as if hanging upon a clothes peg, she had been simply surprised. But when he turned to greet her, and she saw his whimsical brown eyes, with a surprised, half-frightened expression in them as they met hers, she was flattered as nothing had flattered her before, for she was a very young girl, and she saw at once that this tall, strange-looking man recognised her as a woman, and bowed down before her womanhood and did reverence. When he had had a few good nights' rest, and a little of that English food that tastes so extraordinarily and incredibly

good when one first comes back to it, and had had his hair cut, even in his old clothes it was impossible for any girl not to see that Claude Fortescue's was a very striking, indeed eminently noticeable, personality. Then, besides his mobile expression, and eyes that seemed to read the innermost natures of those they looked at, his voice had tones in it. And he talked with quaint turns of phrase, and picturesque, unexpected touches of his journey home and of China, so as to make all the places he mentioned for ever after cease to be merely places in the map, and become instead his places, which it seemed hardly as if anyone else had a right to visit, or even live in, without his leave and by his express permission. Perhaps Lilian Grey did not form any very exact idea of Vladivostock, or even of Foochow, or the Yangtsze River, of which she had heard so much more; but she pictured something, and it never even occurred to her again to speak of the Yangtsze *Kiang*, as her geography books had taught her.

It was Claude Fortescue who gave the lion bush in the garden red holly berries for eyes, after the Chinese fashion. It was he, too, who first put Lilian through a course of English literature. He gave her his little well-used copy of the *Elia* Essays. He read to her Keats' 'Ode on a Grecian Urn,' then smiled his curious smile: 'I wonder—I wonder if Chinese towns only existed upon Chinese vases, we might fancy equally poetically about them. Ought we to thank Heaven, "'Tis Greece, but living Greece no more"? There are people so misguided as to tell us a knowledge of the exact truth is the one great thing to seek after in connection with everything. Oh, whatever you do, escape from ever knowing the truth about anything. Avoid reality, Miss Grey!'

'About myself? Must I not be real?' asked the girl, half mockingly.

'Could you be? I never thought of that,' said he. 'No! no! You are nothing but a mirage! I thought so from the first, with your white face, like white rose petals, and footsteps that are never heard. You are a mirage! What might be, but never is.'

'Sometimes I seem to myself like that,' said Lilian sadly. 'My father was such a distinguished man, they all say, and he died, and my mother. And I am all there is left. And I am—nothing.'

'What might you be?' he asked gravely.

'I don't know,' hesitated the girl. 'It is so hard to know what a woman can be. And I am not clever—or am I? But I have sometimes thought I might be—an inspiration.'

'You are that,' said he, speaking as if it were a matter of course, yet with a kindling fire in his face, although he looked away on the ground.

'Then you must look up, or I am none to you,' cried she, laughing gaily at the, to her, absurdity of the idea.

'I *will* look up,' said he fervently. Then he read her Keats' '*Belle Dame sans Merci*.' 'You are like that, too,' he said.

'Why, my hair is not long, and my eyes, I hope, are not wild.'

'They *might* be,' said he, yet more seriously; then muttered half to himself, 'And I could never face them then.' Then he turned to Miss Gardiner: 'Are there no other young girls in Northampton, auntie? Here have I been six years in China without so much as seeing a girl, and now every poem I read I think is like Miss Grey.' But when he had met all the girls in Northampton he thought so still.

He had only been at home six months, he had wasted, as he now thought, so much time upon the journey home; and even all those six months he could not spend continuously at Northampton. The great paper on his journey had to be read before the Geographical Society; there were visits to China friends he had to pay. But during those six months he educated Lilian Grey as all her schooling had not educated her before. When he went away she was, what he took her for at the first, a woman, with cultivated tastes, not stored very specially with facts so far, emphatically not a learned lady, but with cultivated tastes, and an awakened intelligence, and above all with a heart that could feel, a woman's heart; no longer a child, but a woman, with a woman's capabilities. Then he went away—quite suddenly in the end; telegraphed for a place in the steamer; did not know if he had got one when he left Northampton—whether he might not come back again. But a letter had got overlooked, another had miscarried; it seemed everything had somehow been neglected, and his leave was overdue. There was no time to pack or arrange anything, no opportunity even to say good-bye. He had gone, and had not offered, had not, indeed, said one definite word of love-making. And the girl had no idea of being in love with him; only when she thought of a man

now she thought of Claude Fortescue ; pictured him to herself, as she had always seen him, lounging, always lounging through life, always full of information as an encyclopædia, always whimsical as to his method of communicating it, and regretting something, she knew not what, but regretting it apparently so much that he treated all life as a joke, a poor sort of joke, with no earnestness about it anywhere. He had given her a photograph of himself, a photograph of himself in the new clothes he got to deliver that lecture at the Geographical, with every latest, foolish vagary of fashion, such as all great travellers appear in when they have to show themselves off in London, and which somehow gave him a chest and shoulders, and made him look less interesting and more like other men. But he had refused the one photograph of Lilian Miss Gardiner thought at all satisfactory, declaring it was not like, and he would not dull the image on his brain. There was a little faded silk handkerchief Lilian used to knot round her throat in the evenings. He said he would have that instead ; knotting it absently as he said so. He had never seen her in her beautiful ball dress. Lilian was conscious of regretting this when she first put it on, and saw herself in Miss Gardiner's cheval glass with all her finery. 'But he would like me better in my little every-day dress,' she thought quickly, and at once the ball dress sank to a somewhat secondary position in her eyes. She supposed that every girl was as much pressed to dance, and had as many pretty things said to her. It never once occurred to her that she was in this at all more favoured than others.

But then came Mrs. Betterton's visit, and after that gradually, very gradually, a change came over the quiet life in Northampton. Miss Gardiner had fretted from the first that her nephew had not written ; she thought he might have written from London, then from Marseilles. Then she expected a letter from Suez. In truth the old lady thought he owed it to Lilian to make her an offer ; she thought the girl must look for it, and be unhappy ; and it seemed to her wrong that he did not, not quite honourable, and in that so unlike him. Besides, in any case he might have written to her, who loved him so. She fretted a good deal about it. Possibly it awakened old wounds, brought back a grief of her own youth. After Mrs. Betterton's visit she seemed to fret increasingly. The post came in so often, and never a letter from Claude. All the day long, and every day, it

seemed to be nothing but disappointment ; for Miss Gardiner had long ago lost all count of possible opportunities of hearing from China, and considered every post an opportunity. She used to listen for the postman's knock down the street, next door, with a heightened colour ; then when nothing came, or only something else, no greeting from her boy, her pulse seemed to grow weaker. The old doctor came in the morning now sometimes, and soon the clergyman began to come too. Till lately it had been only his wife. And by degrees Miss Gardiner, who had always moved about so springily and sprightly, lay on the sofa all day long, fretting openly because there was no letter from her nephew.

'I feel sure all is well with him,' said the young girl firmly, 'and it is not from any want of love to you, dear Gardie, that he does not write. It is just—just because he is what he is. Sometimes one wishes he were different in some things. But then he would have to be altogether different, and that would be a pity, would it not, dear Gardie?'

'He is very dear—very dear,' said the old lady sadly. 'But he is not happy. Oh, Lilian, I could see it all this last time he was at home ; there was something on his mind, and he was not happy.'

The girl looked down, her exquisitely curved lips, which were one of the great beauties in her face, curved and uncurved in a slightly troubled fashion. Instinctively she realised the truth of Miss Gardiner's words. Then with a calm decision, to turn the old lady's thoughts, as it were, she said with a smile : 'How is it you never married, dear Gardie ? You are always wanting to make some one or other happy.'

'Nobody asked me, dear, I think,' said the sweet old lady very quietly.

'No ! But was there no one you cared for, Gardie ?'

'There was Claude—Claude's father. I thought—I always thought—but he never offered exactly, at least not quite exactly. He had nothing but his pay, he said, and he was called for to India. And when he came home—when he came home, he spoke to my dear sister. She was the eldest, you know. And do you know, Lilian dear—I have never spoken of the matter to anyone before—but I have often thought perhaps she made a mistake. But it seemed she had always been in love with him, oh ! so much, and so feared

he did not care for her, and so, when he spoke, the joy was too much for her almost, and she fainted into his arms. He was very good to her, very—very good, and he was much too sensitive and high-minded a man ever to say if there had been a mistake. But I still recollect how white and strained he looked at first. And there were many things—many little things that always made me think he had meant to offer for me. But she accepted him. And he did not live many years, and when he died we both looked on Claude as our boy.'

'But, dear Gardie, did it not make you very unhappy?'

'A little, dearest, a little. But it seems all so long ago, and, Lilian, I am so afraid Claude is making a mistake too. He is so like his father, only cleverer, I think, and better read. My dear sister was very clever, and she took such pains with him as a boy.' Then the old lady fell asleep for weariness, and that was the last real talk she ever held with anyone. Lilian would never forget it, and it made her think yet more of Claude Fortescue. And why did he never write? It seemed as strange as death. Here with them one day, full of little solicitudes for them, full of delight in their presence, and making their lives so full of interest by his, and then no more! Nothing ever any more about him, except the things he had left behind! And now Gardie's things too! The young girl sat alone in the presence of Death. And only the old servants petted her, and called her 'Poor dear!' and made her little delicacies she had no heart to eat. And the old doctor continued to come, and the old lawyer came and tried to explain many things which surprised Lilian, and rather frightened her. If only Claude Fortescue had been still at home, so that she could have consulted him! As it was, the lawyer had written to him, and the clergyman. Lilian had no call even to write, and no letter came!

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## CHAPTER III

## LEAVING FOR CHINA

• But I miss the soft elasp of your hand,  
And your breath, warm on my cheek,  
And I still keep listening for the words  
You never more will speak.

MRS. PRICE BLACKWOOD.

MRS. BETTERTON sat surrounded by packing cases. On the table lay the black silk bag in which she carried her Bible. One of her children was solemnly pasting labels on to the boxes ; the other equally solemnly carrying the paste pot. Mrs. Betterton herself was reading what she still called her 'mail.' That is one of the phrases first picked up in China, and she was only home on a visit, and very easily relapsed into China phrases.

'MY DEAR MRS. BETTERTON,—There is a great awakening in the West of Scotland. Can you spare us any of your precious time?' &c.

'MY DEAR MRS. BETTERTON,—My niece Janie has long entertained an ardent desire to be a missionary. She feels now as if your address the other night had been a personal call to her to China. Can you?' &c.

Mrs. Betterton read them all through, one after the other. Then she came to one she had kept to the last, because of the very pretty handwriting. 'Won't do for the mission field, this one !' she said to herself ; then sniffing somewhat indignantly at the black border : 'Be not ye as the heathen—"sorrow not, even as others which have no hope,"' she said, as she took the letter out of its envelope.

'DEAR MRS. BETTERTON,—I see by the paper that you have not yet sailed for China, but are just going to do so. Would you be willing for me to go with you? I have been ill, and the doctor says I need change of air and scene.' —'Change of air and scene ! Stuff and nonsense ! You can vary that fifty thousand times without going to one of the worst climates there is for women !'—'You will perhaps not have heard of my great sorrow, or I think you would have written. I am now really quite alone in the world, for my dear, dear Gardie is dead. She was so sweet and patient,

but she was ill a long time, and I could not bear not to do everything I could for her. I think that is how I got ill. I should like to see China, because I have heard so much of it from my dear Miss Gardiner's nephew.'—'Oh, she's candid, she is!' grumbled Mrs. Betterton. 'She means she wants to meet Claude Fortescue again. Well, I don't wish that she should.'—'You said you meant to take back your two youngest children with you. If you would let me go with you, although I am afraid I could never be of use for mission work myself, yet I have thought I might set you freer to do it by taking care of the children. I am very fond of children, and like teaching them. I believe the journey to China is very expensive, and perhaps living there is too; but to my surprise I find now that I have a great deal more money than I had any idea of. It would be a great help to me if I had your advice as to what I ought to do with it, and what I ought to do with myself too; for I feel so very ignorant, and as if I might so easily make so many mistakes. This has led me to ask whether you think you could be so kind as to take care of me for a little while. And remembering how you spoke of my dear mother, I thought for her sake you might even be glad to show kindness to her daughter, for I am indeed now lonely.

'Yours ever lovingly,

'LILIAN GREY

'P.S.—If it is quite out of the question for me to go to China with you, do you think I ought to ask the Grafina Anna, my father's second wife, to help me? She is married again, you know. You see, though Mr. Jecks is a very good lawyer, I dare say, he is so old he cannot advise me. He only grieves over poor dear Gardie's "premature decease," as he calls it. But though she was 72, it is true that till quite the last she always seemed young.'

It was that postscript decided it. How could Mrs. Betterton write back and advise the girl not to apply to her father's second wife, the only other person on whom she seemed to have any claim, and yet not take charge of her herself? How could she write to her darling cousin's only child, and say she could do nothing for her, but advised her to apply to that odious woman, who had taken her mother's place? 'If I could but think she was suited for the mission field,' said Mrs. Betterton, who always spoke of it thus, as if



it were a field of battle, and she herself an old campaigner. 'But she is not! *She is not!*' Then visions of the various sights and sounds and smells to which the girl would have to be exposed if she took her with her to the West of China crowded upon the troubled woman's imagination. She thought of her lost cousin with her dainty ways, of Lilian Grey herself with her high-bred air. 'It is impossible! No! it is impossible!' she exclaimed. 'What would her father have thought of such a proposition? But God can take care of His own,' she added. There were those other letters to be answered. There were those cases to be soldered down and despatched. There were her boys at school to be taken leave of. There were yet clothes to be ordered. Stores! She sat down and wrote:

'MY DEAR LILIAN,—You are right in thinking I should certainly have written to you had I known of your great grief. But Miss Gardiner was a truly good woman. We must not sorrow for her, only for ourselves—that is, for you, my poor child, who must miss her sorely. If you think seriously of going to China with me, you must come up to town at once, with a letter from your doctor, to consult our mission doctor as to whether you can stand the climate. If you asked your own doctor he would probably have no more notion than you have yourself as to what the climate of China really is. I am starting in a fortnight by one of the Glen boats. Possibly I could put off till the next if it were impossible for you to be ready in a fortnight. But it would be *very* inconvenient. If you decide to go out, you will want no evening dresses, nor summer hats, nor any bonnets. But get strong boots and shoes, and the *coolest* possible underclothing. Take only white stockings for summer. You will be in mourning. Recollect you cannot wear it in China in summer. Best get everything white. But I have not succeeded in training anyone to wash properly yet. Silk under vests are very useful. I strongly recommend your having your dresses made with loose jackets—I believe you young people call them dressing jackets—for summer. No linings, of course! For winter you will need thicker clothing than in England, and if you have not got furs, you must buy them in China. No between things are of any use. Nor need you take any gloves unless you like. You can, indeed, only wear them in winter. I need hardly add that to have your mother's daughter with me must be for me always joy unspeakable. But the West of

China is not a fit place to take you to. And do not fancy you will meet Mr. Fortescue. China is bigger than Europe, and I am going to the far West of it, where he has been already, so is not likely to be sent again. And nobody ever passes there ; they must go on purpose. Thank you for your kind offer about the children. It might be a great help to me. And I dare say, if you go with me, you may be glad of some occupation. But recollect that if you can think of some happier change of scene and air for yourself, you need not hesitate to throw me over, even at the last moment.

‘Yours in Christ lovingly,

‘MARY BETTERTON.’

But lest this should not be enough discouragement, Mrs. Betterton even made another journey to Northampton for the purpose, and there, beside that very lion, that had lost one of his holly-berry eyes, tried to describe her destination in China.

‘Have you read Dr. Johnson’s description of Edinburgh a hundred years ago ? No ! Well, that’s no good, then. I was going to say Chungking now must be almost as filthy and disgusting. Can you do without any letters or newspapers for a month or more ?’

‘I never get any letters I much care for,’ said the young girl, rather sadly. ‘And Gardie did not quite approve of my reading the papers. That is one of the points on which we differed,’ she said firmly. ‘I thought, as my father had been a diplomatist, I ought at least to know something about our foreign policy. So I used to read that part and the leading articles ; and since I knew you, about the Exeter Hall meetings, because I saw your name. But I do not think I should mind not getting the papers at all.’

‘Did you notice I said you would require no evening dresses nor gloves ? No parties ! No visiting !’

‘Oh, but I do not want parties with Gardie dead—nor visiting,’ added the girl, her eyes filling with tears.

‘Do you like *dirt* ?’ asked Mrs. Betterton, driven almost to the end of her resources.

Lilian stared.

‘Do you like dirt, I say ?—filth—squalor.’

‘But no one could like such things.’

‘Yes, the Chinese do. They revel in them. Such filth and squalor as, of course, it is impossible for you to conceive till you have been in China,’ added Mrs. Betterton, with a sigh. ‘Do you like being insulted—reviled at every turn ?’

'I thought the Chinese were hungering for the Gospel,' said Lilian quickly. 'Surely they do not revile you, who bring it to them.'

'They revile all foreigners, whatever they bring. They think our dress indecent, our habits immoral, our behaviour indecorous. They regard us as a very outrageous though clever sort of savages.'

The girl's eyes distended in a manner peculiar to herself, almost as if she were seeing more than other people saw, and as if, just then, she did not like what she saw. 'And yet you love them?' she asked, speaking very low now.

'Yes, I love them,' said Mrs. Betterton. 'I'm ready to lay down my life for their sakes. But it is as Christ laid down His for us—because they need it.'

'Mr. Fortescue described the Chinese as caring so much for learning, esteeming it above everything; as being the most wonderfully faithful, good servants, with a strong sense of duty, and never tiring in the performance of it. He spoke of them as sober, thrifty, patient, and hard-working. And above all, he said what with their guilds, and their ideas as to the duties of relations one to another, none ever stood alone in China against the world, as people do so sorrowfully here in England.'

'All that is quite true,' said Mrs. Betterton drily. But there came a tightening at her heart, as across the years pierced the memory of how that other, the girl's mother, had quoted 'Harcourt' to her.

In the end they all sailed together from the docks on a raw, drizzly morning, turning into snow as the day wore on. And bitterly cold it felt all across the Bay of Biscay, even into the Mediterranean. But at Port Said the sun shone on the flat yellow sands, and the motley crowd of Arab boys and veiled women, and Lilian began to smile once more at the novelty of everything around her. Till she did so, Mrs. Betterton had not realised how terribly the poor girl felt oppressed by the sense of her own isolation. She was the only young girl on the steamer. Everyone else was married, except four new recruits for the mission field, one the Janie of whom previous mention has been made. But she was close on thirty, and the other lady past it. There was an engineer taking out a very young and bonny bride from Scotland. But they had only been married two days before starting, and were too full of the mystery of their love and of one another

to hold much converse with the rest of the world. There was another man with a bride, but she looked elderly, and always laid great stress upon what she seemed to consider the remarkable fact that she had never been in China or the East before, and that everything was new to her. The ship's officers laughed about this a good deal, declaring she was a Eurasian, China born and bred ; certainly she had a very yellow face never to have been out of England before. Neither did she speak English like an Englishwoman. Besides these, there was a rather *gauche* youth, who was going out to join his father in Shanghai, and who, having done so, had evidently not the least idea what further would become of him.

Mrs. Betterton's two children did lessons regularly every day. When they had finished their lessons, they amused themselves by preaching sermons to one another, to the far greater amusement of their elders. What interested Lilian most, however, was when they played at being 'some of our Christians,' and made three little children going out second class personate 'Catholics.' It seemed to let her further into the inside of the life she was going to live than anything she was told about it.

But every now and then she softly cried herself to sleep, thinking of Miss Gardiner and her pink cap-strings, and how far she herself was travelling from the old life, so far that she felt now she never could return. A voyage to China in a Glen boat is so much longer than it is possible to imagine beforehand, and the ocean seems so vast and trackless, as if one never could go back.

## CHAPTER IV

### AT THE CLUB BAR. NO. I

It tak's a' sort of folk to mak' a world.

SCOTCH PROVERB.

He might be a very clever man by nature, for aught I know, but he laid so many books upon his head that his brains could not move.

GREGORY OF KIPPIS.

THE novelty of landing in China is discounted beforehand by the marvels of Singapore. What can ever again equal the strangeness of that first arriving in the East? The trees hanging out flaming red flowers up above, Cingalese mer-

chants, with sarangs and combs in their hair, wandering about with handkerchiefs full of precious stones, whilst yellow Chinamen and bronze Indians appear alike clothesless, the Indians walking down the street with a stately dignity and poise, suggesting bronze statues rather than men, to be stood in corner of drawing-room or hall, without any sense of nude indecency ; the Chinese, as seen at Singapore, revolting, indecent, disgusting alike to sight and smell ! But nothing discounts the glories of Hongkong, and Lilian felt she could never forget her one evening there, the water all translucent blue yet lambent flame as it washed against the side of the steamer, each dip of the oar revealing flames of fire, bringing up flames of fire, dripping from the oar ! Is there ever anywhere else such phosphorescence as at Hongkong ? The Peak behind garlanded with lights, the perfume of the strange flowers scenting the night air, recalling those she had seen among the huge fern trees growing by the roadside, all combined to make a magic scene far surpassing the best efforts of the decorator upon the London stage, besides having the crowning finish that it was *real*. Mrs. Betterton had taken Lilian on shore to see the Botanical Gardens, and dine at the Hongkong Hotel. Most painstakingly she tried to remind herself that she was not only a missionary now, but also the chaperone of a young heiress, and at each port of call sought to do what she could to show the girl the wonders of the world. Lilian had been specially impressed by the Chinese servants at Hongkong, with their long pale blue gowns, and their very long plaits of hair swaying, as they moved sadly but haughtily among the guests, moving noiselessly, and indicating by every gesture and movement how much they felt themselves intellectually above the rough barbarians they were set to serve, yet for their own credit's sake serving them to perfection, forestalling every slightest fancy. The Botanical Gardens had been a fairy bower, and the food now tasted delicious after the long monotony of steamer fare ; the girl's eyes shone, she laughed softly at times, and her white cheeks gained a faint tinge of colour. Even in her little travelling dress she looked like a young princess, and Mrs. Betterton was not surprised that every man they met had turned to look at her. She was already beginning to feel a sense of pride and property in Lilian's daintiness. ' If only some nice man would fall in love with her, and carry her off before ever I take her up the Yangtze ! ' sighed Mrs. Betterton. She had

been plain all her life, clumsily made, with no beauty but her eyes, which, again, were almost too earnest and glowing for their setting, and in her face rather alarming than attractive; but just for that reason, probably, she set an exaggerated store upon beauty, and thought that the pretty girls ought to have life's paths made easy for them in a way that was not necessary for plain girls. Many men think the same, and more plain women than men fancy. Lilian herself laid no claim to pleasant things; there was a latent store of energy and power of endurance in her slight frame that astonished Miss Neligan and Miss Frost, the two would-be missionaries. Even when cold and sea-sick at first, she had preserved an air of comfort that the others had envied but had not tried to emulate; afterwards she had never found the tropical heat overpower her, nor ever once complained of the steamer food, never apparently noticing it, except occasionally to recommend to the others something 'particularly nice.' Now she was delighting in the luxuries of Hongkong, which for her seemed to have no rumple in the rose leaf, and so, of course, it came naturally about, when some new men passengers joined the steamer there, that they all sought to make acquaintance with the pretty girl with the bright face.

'This is your first visit to China, I suppose,' asked a man in very old-looking clothes, with rather bloodshot eyes, and a generally withered look about his face, yet with a pleasant enough smile and manner, after he had made acquaintance by moving her chair and arranging a cushion, and had somehow succeeded in getting himself established beside her. 'Well, I hope you will not be disappointed. But young ladies generally like Shanghai very much, I believe.'

'I am not going to stop at Shanghai, though,' replied Miss Grey with a smile, knowing already how much surprise her announcement always created. 'We are going on at once into the West, I believe.'

Surprise—bewilderment—horror in her companion's eyes! 'But you are not a missionary, surely?' he exclaimed with vigour.

'No; but why not? Why are you sure I am not?'

'I am sure of nothing,' replied the other, who was an Acting Commissioner in the Chinese Customs on his way from Hoihow to take up a new post. 'After twenty years in China any man knows better than to be sure of anything. Only I never saw a missionary look so tidy as you do.'

‘A—h!’

‘But there are no open ports in the West of China,’ he persisted.

‘No; we are not going to what is called an open port,’ said Miss Grey quietly. The phrase was still new to her, and conveyed nothing in particular as yet. Then, not wanting to pose as a mystery, ‘My cousin, Mrs. Betterton, is a missionary, and I have come out to stay with her for a time in China. It is very beautiful in the West, I believe. But how lovely Hongkong is! No one had ever told me about Hongkong.’

‘Some one has told her about the West of China, it seems,’ thought the Commissioner. ‘She has come out to marry that some one, I suppose. Lucky fellow!’ he said to himself. ‘One of those dreadful missionaries, too, of course!’ But all that he said aloud was, ‘I have never been in the West of China. Somehow, one does not generally realise that it has a West.’

‘Why, there are three out of the eighteen provinces,’ said Miss Grey, surprised.

‘You know your China well. Did some one, the same person who told you about the West of China, tell you all about the eighteen provinces too?’

‘Of course we have talked a great deal about China on the way out,’ replied the girl, without noticing the half-mocking tone. ‘But I think all that I really know about China I learnt from Mr. Fortescue.’

‘What! Fortescue in the Consular Service? Do you know him?’ sitting forward now and speaking with animation.

‘Yes, I know him very well,’ said Lilian. She would have said he was her best friend but that he had never written. ‘He was Miss Gardiner’s nephew, the lady with whom I have always lived till now.’

‘Now?’

‘Now she is dead,’ said the girl very sadly. ‘I have no home now; and Mr. Fortescue has none either. But I do not even know if he knows. I so often feel as if I ought to write to him about it all,’ she murmured, speaking more to herself than to her companion. But Mr. Stuckey was certainly a very sympathetic listener.

‘What! that his aunt is dead? Was he very fond of her? Did he know her well? Some aunts, you know——’

'She was his mother—and my mother too,' said Lilian staunchly, her eyes full of tears.

'Why, then, you and Fortescue must be brother and sister.'

'I never thought of it in that way quite,' said Miss Grey musingly. 'But do you think I ought to write and tell him?'

'I am sure he could not but be glad to get a letter from you.' Then after a pause, with sudden energy, 'What a fool of an unpractical fellow!'

'Why—why do you say that?' asked Lilian.

But not even a three years' imprisonment among the paddy fields of Hainan had reduced Mr. Stuckey to the level of telling her that he was thinking: 'Would any other man but Fortescue have known this evidently adorable girl so intimately without taking the practical step of securing her for himself before she came out to China, homeless, as she says?' All he would say was, 'Oh! of course he is well known as the most delightful fellow possible. But unpractical rather, don't you think?' Then turning to a, to him, far more interesting subject, 'You are not going to let them make a missionary of you, I hope? It is all nonsense, you know, really. The Chinese are a very decent people, and the missionaries don't do them any good. Fortescue told you that too, I am sure.'

'He said he regarded missions as a diffusion of what might have been dangerous as concentrated energy,' said Lilian, smiling. 'He always said the poor missionaries, when they came out to China, burnt out their aspirations as the Chinese do their joss sticks, and a grateful odour alone remained.'

'Ah! that's Fortescue all over. A pity he has gone off his head now,' he went on, forgetting whom he was talking to for the moment, as people do who have been too much alone. 'Oh no, I don't mean strait waistcoat and all that sort of thing. But all those consular fellows are apt to turn queer. What lady was that said she was making a collection of consular oddities? Well, Fortescue has been qualifying for that, I suppose. It is the study of Chinese, you know, without any steady routine work to counterbalance it. No European brain can grapple with Chinese and remain balanced. Why, look at Mrs. Betterton there! Isn't she taking you and those two unfortunate little children of hers



into the interior? Would any woman of sane brain do that?’

‘I thought you had never been into the West of China.’

‘No, but I know what it is like. Oh, it is all alike. No sanitary precautions of *any* kind; no roads; no doctors; no policemen; no postmen. I know my China too, but not after your friend Fortescue’s fashion; and I’d clear out of it to-morrow for a safe three hundred pounds a year in England. You can live on that in England. You can’t marry; but neither can you marry here, for there’s no one to be married to. So how are you better off?’

‘Then you don’t like China?’ asked the girl sympathetically.

‘Like it? I loathe it! And I detest and despise the Chinese just about as much as they detest and despise me. Oh, yes, they do! You wait a little, and you’ll feel they do; and you’ll feel it more and more every day you stay in China. They hate the sight of us, and they don’t want us among them, and so the more I keep out of their way the better, I say. I don’t go among them any more than I can help, I can tell you. Now, Fortescue is just the other sort. He is altogether pro-Chinese, like so many of the consuls. And just because he can’t see too much of them, he has got sick leave, and is off to Japan already, I suppose, while I’m on my way to Wuhu, worse luck to me! But the shooting is good there, and there’s a house. That’s always something in China, if you do but get a house. As for me, I am sick of temples!’

It was whilst they were delayed in Shanghai that Lilian Grey asked Mrs. Betterton if she did not think she ought to write to Mr. Fortescue to tell him about his aunt’s death. There was at once that expression of repressed energy that always came over Mrs. Betterton’s face whenever Claude Fortescue’s name was mentioned, and that had hitherto prevented the girl from consulting her. But after a pause she said distinctly, ‘Yes, I think you ought. You are the only person who can really tell him about her. And he ought to hear.’

Lilian was conscious of surprise; she had fully expected to be told not to write. Emboldened, she now asked further: ‘You do not like Mr. Fortescue, cousin Mary. Why is it?’

Mrs. Betterton had evidently got her answer to this ques-

tion all ready prepared, it came so glibly: 'He is a man for whom I can entertain no respect.'

'But why is that?' persisted Lilian.

'My dear, can you respect him yourself? His opinions—yes. His abilities—he is very clever, very well informed, very agreeable, I have no doubt. But what is he trying to make of his life? Does he regard it as a trust from God? Do you think yourself that he is a true Christian?'

'No, but neither are the Chinese. And you try to convert them.'

'I have tried to convert Claude Fortescue too,' said Mrs. Betterton gloomily, 'but without success. I leave him now in God's hands. He had a dear, good aunt, who prayed for him. It may be her prayers will yet be heard. But I can do nothing further for him. He must work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. And will he? Is it like Mr. Fortescue to work at anything in that spirit?'

'He has worked at Chinese very hard, I believe.'

'Oh, yes, he works at Chinese,' sniffed Mrs. Betterton. 'He is one of your sinologues, who are of no earthly use to themselves or anyone else—cannot say two sentences in the colloquial to save their lives, and yet must criticise what everyone else says. It always reminds me of Nero fiddling while Rome was burning, the way those sinologues go on.'

So Lilian wrote her letter at last, but what a different letter from what she would have written at Northampton! A cold, stiff, mechanical sort of letter that it seemed almost like an insult to 'poor Gardie' to send to her much-loved nephew. But it mattered the less what the letter was like, because it was never sent, for no one seemed able to say where Mr. Fortescue was. He had been given sick leave, they said, but he had not come down to Shanghai, and none could think what he was doing. 'It was a shame sending him back to Chungking again when he returned from England,' said one lady. 'He nearly went out of his mind with it the time before.'

'They should never send unmarried men to those lonely places,' said Mrs. Betterton severely.

'My dear Mrs. Betterton, what man would care to take a wife to such a place?'

'I have no patience with that idea, that wives are a sort of lap dogs,' said Mrs. Betterton. 'If it is good enough for him, it is good enough for her. And if a wife would find it

dull with her husband beside her, what must a man find it all by himself? It is *not* right, I say,' said Mrs. Betterton; 'very few men stand it uninjured, both in body and mind, by themselves alone. I know what I am talking about. Mr. Betterton and I were five years without seeing a European face when we first came out, except ourselves and the children as they came one after another. And it is a trial, you may say what you like. I could not have stood it by myself. But as it was, we neither of us fell sick, and the Lord mercifully preserved us in our senses. But that was in consequence of earnest and constant prayer.'

'All the same, that dear Mrs. Betterton is very odd,' said the other lady afterwards. 'And she is actually taking her cousin, that lovely Miss Grey—a great heiress too, I hear—to Chungking! It is not a fit place for a girl. Some one ought to interfere. I really think the Consul should refuse her a passport. Of course the girl knows no better—such a sweet girl, too! She was showing me her boots to-day—great clumping things with nails—and the flea powder and carbolic she had got ready, and a large square of waterproof sheeting, in case she had to sleep in a Chinese inn, because the vermin, she has been told, so hate the smell of waterproofing! And so do I, I am sure. And the idea of her sleeping in a Chinese inn! It is positively indecent. I can't think what Mrs. Betterton can be thinking of. I suppose she means to get her into the mission, and then to get hold of all her money. But her own cousin! Why, it is disgraceful!'

That was the general opinion about it in Shanghai, where it was hotly discussed at some of the ladies' tea-parties. It was even mentioned at the Club bar.

'I say, what are you young fellows thinking of, that you don't form a rescue party and carry off this heiress and beauty?' said an elderly man, whose reddened face and cordiality of manner alike proclaimed him a broker.

'They say there's a man in the Consular Service who knows all about her,' said the junior representative of a bank.

'Oh, come out to be married, is she? Oh, that's quite another pair of shoes.'

'I say, you Chaszees are in luck. She is going up to Hankow,' said a steamer owner. 'When do you go up, Clarke?'

'The whole boiling of us is going off to-night or to-morrow night,' said the man addressed. 'I'm waiting to book till I

hear by which boat the heiress goes. Fact is, China teas are played out. I have long been on the look-out for a new opening.'

'By the way, do any of you fellows know the truth of this report about that fellow Fortescue—that he has only got sick leave in order to go off westward and strike out a new route to Bhamo? Is it true, or is it a bunder?' asked a student interpreter.

'A bunder, I should say,' said a Mr. Cunningham (of whom more afterwards). 'The fellow's mad as a hatter, but no fellow's mad enough for that—those pestilential valleys—ill already—and Yunnan has got a special fever of its own, they say, an improvement on Shanghai fever—deadly!'

'Well, I can't make out that he has passed down river yet, and he has been relieved at Chungking some time ago.'

'Yes, Threshie Reid has gone there, hasn't he? Poor old Threshie! I wonder how he'll stand it!'

'Oh, he is a tough subject, is Threshie,' said the youthful interpreter; 'besides, he meant to take precautions—wasn't going to open a single Chinese book the whole time he was there.'

'Ah, that's the right sort,' said the broker. 'It is that confounded language does all the mischief. I wouldn't know a word of it, not if you were to pay me.'

'Not if it would make Hongkong Bank shares go up?'

'It would bring them down—with a run it would, if men took to learning Chinese in the bank,' persisted the broker, with increased vigour. 'There is not a man in business ever been the better for learning a word of their lingo. "Want-chee! No wantchee! Puttee book, and maskee"—that is all the conversation that should ever pass between an Englishman who respects himself and a native. But about this girl—is she really so good-looking?'

'Stuckey is raving about her. He came up from Hongkong with her, and, I believe, intends to ask the whole party to stay with him at Wuhu. She is travelling with quite a gang of missionaries. Confound them! they'll flood the whole place soon—be crowding us all out. Come and have a drink, daddy. I can't hear of a missionary without wanting a cocktail to take the taste away.'

'Right you are, my boy.'

'You'll hear of missionaries once too often, it strikes me, my fine fellow,' said the steamer owner, as the pair moved off, the one of them not over steadily.

## CHAPTER V

## TEA AND TEA-CUPS

*Te veniente die, te decedente canebat.*—HORACE.

See what dire contention rules  
As markets open ! Foreign fools !  
No crusade yet was ever half so wrathy  
As there exists for Congo, gun, and Twankay.  
Not thus with racy Oolong—thou  
Art only known and prized by few.  
Successive draughts increase delight,  
We chat o'er thee—ay, pass the night.

CANTON, 1827.

THE missionary party was increased in Shanghai. Miss Pearce and Miss Alger had been studying Chinese there for some months before starting for the interior, and now a Mr. and Mrs. Jenkins also appeared, and a medical missionary, Dr. Maxwell, all ready to travel together with Mrs. Betterton to Chungking. It was in the evening they all went on board the large American river boat that was to take them the first 600 miles up the river to Hankow. Then there were prayers, and fervent blessings from missionary friends, and then, about ten o'clock, Mr. Stuckey appeared, greatly to Lilian's relief, for she was beginning to feel like an impostor, and as if she had no business to be there amongst the devoted band who, it seemed, everyone considered were doing something heroic, something like sallying out on a forlorn hope. She had begun to feel frightened, and greeted with effusion the sight of Mr. Stuckey's very commonplace coat and face, about both of which there was clearly nothing of the martyr element. Yet he, too, was going up river. Then, later still, came the tea men, and there was suddenly a great chattering about Keemens and Hohows, and which would be the first tea steamer to get off, to the accompaniment of a great popping of corks, and healths all round. But next day, when the steamer was under way, it seemed as if the tea men, who were going to Hankow, had absolutely not a word to say to each other, and not the name of a tea did anyone mention, as they sat like mutes at a funeral, only with faces of a somewhat studied placidity ; one or two of them only looking very sickly, as if they had delicate nerves, or susceptibilities that were easily ruffled.

‘They had need to have delicate nerves,’ said Mrs. Betterton instructively. ‘How else do you think they could distinguish the flavours of all the different teas? Could you do it? No! You might the first time. But go over twenty teas twice, and see if you’ll know them again. And they have to go over a couple of hundred in the day. And what do you think your nerves would be like after three months of that work, year after year; in a place like Hankow, too, of all places in the world, where what breeze there is regularly dies away before the sun sets, and the heat is the greatest and the mosquitoes the biggest on the whole river?’

The heat was pretty great already, they all thought, and Mrs. Betterton took occasion to deliver a little address, when about 5 P.M. Miss Pearce removed her dark glasses with a sigh of relief, as she looked upon the wide expanse of liquid yellow mud that the lower Yangtze presents in the month of May. The whole missionary party were assembled together, with the exception of Dr. Maxwell, who was talking to one of the Chaszees, as tea-tasters are called in China; Miss Neligan, Mr. Jenkins, and Miss Alger stretched at full length in long chairs, the others more or less comfortably settled in basket-work arm-chairs, Mrs. Jenkins alone working, and Lilian Grey attempting to read.

‘It is hot,’ said Mrs. Betterton, as a prelude, to which everyone agreed. ‘And it will soon be hotter.’ Dissatisfaction evidently felt by her audience. ‘Now, I don’t want to be hard upon anyone. And I know lounging is good for some people’s backs. I don’t want to condemn lounging for those it suits. But I want to ask you all to remember that in coming out to China to convert the heathen, we have taken up our cross and we cannot lay it down. We must bring under our bodies, and keep them in subjection, and whether it is heat, or glare, or mosquitoes, or smells, or noises, or all of them put together, we missionaries ought to face them more cheerily rather than less cheerily than other people. I don’t say we ought not to make ourselves as comfortable as we *can* under the circumstances’—this with a side glance at Mr. Jenkins, who certainly seemed to have studied comfort rather than elegance both in his attitude and attire. ‘But we ought only to do so in order to rise up better fitted for our work, *not* for the sensuous gratification of the moment. I happen to have a back that does not require much lying about. You, my dear, have the same, I should say,’ turning to Lilian.

‘Perhaps it runs in the family. And you, my dear,’ looking at Janie Frost, ‘with your five feet ten, naturally require a little more support. But these gentlemen in the tea business all look as nattily dressed as if they were quite cool; it even helps me to feel cool to look at them. And they look as alert and self-possessed as if they were in London; yet they are going to a worse climate than we are, and they know it. I wish that when missionaries lie about, or in any other way try to mitigate the climate to themselves, they would do so with the aid of intending to get up the stronger for it. If we ever lie down, let us do it to the glory of God. I am quite in favour of dark glasses and sun hats, and all reasonable precautions. But let us never forget we have come out here to face the climate, not to sink under it. And if we cannot stand it, let us go home, and work where we have strength to work. Forgive these few words; but some of you are new comers. And when we sing “Hold the Fort,” we must remember we do not hold it by merely sleeping in it. Now, how much progress do you think you have made in Chinese to-day?’—this to Miss Neligan. ‘It is so hot! But do you know that this is the beginning of May, and it will not be so cool again probably till next October? Yes, it is trying, very trying. And some people die of it. I don’t wish you to die. But I do wish you to work in spite of it, or to go home. If there is one thing I cannot bear the sight of, it is an idle missionary’—this with again a side glance at Mr. Jenkins; and away walked Mrs. Betterton, and actually engaged in conversation with one of the tea-tasters. She had no idea, as she often said, of missionaries keeping to themselves as if they were pariahs, and so she singled out the liveliest-looking of the Chaszees, and was soon making him laugh by her eager interest in the opening tea-market.

‘But forgive me, madam, are you going to start in opposition? We had a lady tea-taster once, but she was an *Amurrican*, you know. I thought you were a missionary.’

‘That is my vocation,’ said Mrs. Betterton; ‘but that surely does not preclude my taking an interest in what so nearly concerns the people I live amongst. The Chinese have nothing but their tea and silk to depend upon, as long as they are not allowed to work their mines. In the West I have naturally heard most about silk, therefore I thought I would seize the opportunity of learning from you—who are so qualified to impart it—something about tea.’

'Well now, my dear madam, I'll tell you something to which you could usefully devote your energies, to the *real* benefit of the Chinese. If you would teach them how to pick and fire their tea—no more tanny flavour, no more mixture of young and old leaves—then we should not all be ruined off the face of the East by that vile decoction from India, which is poison to the nerves, and will soon have a more deleterious effect upon the British constitution than all the whisky in the United Kingdom; whereas real good China tea is a mild infusion with a grateful flavour, at once soothing and refreshing, with the veriest *souppçon* of stimulus. Do you know the amount of tannin in Indian tea? And people will hand you a cup from a teapot that has been standing for half an hour with a cozy upon it—actually with a cozy upon it!—when you happen to drop in a bit late, and do it apparently perfectly unaware that they might just as well offer you a cup of cold poison. They'll find out their mistake when it is too late. There will be no good China tea to be had then. The China tea trade will have been ruined. Every China new year some of the Chinese tea men kill themselves because they have sold to a loss, and know they will not be able to meet their liabilities. And this year, to pay at all, we must give them three-halfpence per pound less all round. We are so heavily weighted by the duty, you see—fourpence in England and three-halfpence here—we can't undersell the Indian market, and to make money we ought to do that now. For the taste for good China tea has gone out. Oh, yes, I know private individuals here and there, but the grocers don't want it; they only use it for blending, and the consequence is you can only rarely get a cup of tea you can drink in England now, and the doctors are warning people against tea, as they used to do against alcohol. And my belief is we shall all be driven to taking beer with our breakfasts, as in the days of Queen Elizabeth, which, as I make no doubt you are a teetotaller, must be an inexpressibly shocking prospect to you.'

'But do you not think it is rather your business than mine to teach the Chinese to prepare their tea properly?' asked Mrs. Betterton slyly.

'No, madam. My business—and I hope I know it by now, for I have been thirty years at it—is to make money out of the Chinese by every means I can. It is not my business to do them any good. I am a tea-taster, madam. I am not a philanthropist.'



‘And I am a missionary,’ said Mrs. Betterton, ‘I am not a philanthropist.’

Then they went at it tooth and nail, the missionary question, the opium question, the possible future of China, the duties of England in the matter. In the end they parted exhausted rather than convinced, but capital friends now, the tea-taster making a mental note of Mrs. Betterton as one of the people to whom he would send a half-chest of this season’s best, and Mrs. Betterton begging him kindly to indoctrinate Miss Grey in the mysteries of tea-tasting whilst at Hankow, and if possible to take her over one of the Russian brick tea factories there.

Meanwhile Mr. Stuckey had seized the opportunity to approach Miss Grey. ‘They come no longer in companies, but in whole battalions. You are so encompassed now, I have not known how to get near you.’

‘I have been trying to read,’ said the girl, smiling. ‘I did not know you were wanting to talk to me. It is very kind of you, I am sure. There is so much I want to hear.’

No wonder Mr. Stuckey’s eyes shone, and he raved about Lilian Grey. This was so unlike the reception he would have met with from any China-bred girl, and even of China-bred girls there had been none at Hoihow.

‘What is it you want to hear about?’

‘First about yourself,’ said the girl. ‘You see you are the very first man I have met in the Chinese Customs Service. I never knew there was such a thing as a Chinese Customs Service, all with European officers. But you see you are actually a Chinese official, and I do so want to know how you feel about it. Do you really feel as if China’s interests were yours, and you must serve her to the death?’

‘Not a bit!’ said Mr. Stuckey. ‘I am very much afraid I shall serve her to the death if I stay out much longer, for I have had fever pretty badly in Hoihow. Every man has who goes there. But I don’t intend to die a day sooner than I can help, and I don’t care *that* for China.’

‘Yet you take her pay,’ said the girl mournfully, almost reproachfully. Then in a lighter tone, ‘But then what are you looking forward to doing in Wuhu?’

‘Shooting!’ replied Mr. Stuckey with decision. ‘Shooting, and boring myself to death, and wishing I had never been born—a younger son.’

‘O-h!’ in a tone of relief at the addition to his sentence. ‘But then do you wish your elder brother dead?’

'What ! old Jemmie ! No, I am not quite such a ruffian as that. Why, Jemmie used to tip me when I went to school. I wish he'd think I was going to school now,' with a laugh. 'He has been pretty wild since then. They mostly are, rather, in the Life Guards. Anyhow they have the chance. I wish I had a chance. But I say, Miss Grey, what do you think of the whole thing now ? Do you think Miss Neligan and Miss Frost and the whole lot of them will do the Chinese much good ?'

'If you ask me what I think of Miss Neligan,' said Lilian, laughing, 'I'm afraid she's what schoolboys call rather a duffer. So I can't fancy her doing much good, as you call it, anyhow.'

'Well, they are all duffers, if you look close enough.'

'Oh, no, not Miss Frost, she is not a duffer. *Nor* Mrs. Betterton.'

'I don't know if I have exactly that exalted opinion of Mrs. Betterton that you seem to have,' grumbled Mr. Stuckey. 'But why didn't you become a missionary if you think so highly of them all ? Don't you really in your heart of hearts think of it at all ? I am always afraid you do.'

'Not at all,' said the girl. 'You see it is no question of whether it would be a good thing or not. I have felt no call. They have all been called to the work, they say. I don't quite know how it is, and once Mrs. Betterton did say perhaps I had had an outward call from having nothing to hinder me, and having come out to China and everything. But I have certainly never had any inward, spiritual call. And you see I know nothing about the Chinese, what they believe, or hope, or fear. I should not know how to set about making Christians of them, for I should not know how much change was needed in them. I don't know what they are now really. And it doesn't matter what people are called. If they were to be Christians like our butcher or grocer at Northampton, I can't see how that would be of any use. The grocer was a converted man, he said, but his sugar was so bad I am sure he put sand in it, and his bills—they were not always right. And one of his daughters he was so hard to. And the butcher, he was a Churchman, but I'm afraid he used to drink, and he did ill-use the boys in his employ so. I should think there must be many Chinese more Christian than those two men. Yet the grocer, I feel sure, subscribed to missions to the heathen. Of course, if one could make them Christians like Mrs. Better-

ton or Miss Frost, that would be very different, for they both seem never to think of anything but how they can live for God !' She was speaking excitedly, with her grey eyes wide dilated, now. But she paused, and looked appealingly at him. 'Why do you—why does everyone seem to think I am to defend missionaries ? I see that some are stupid, and some are good, just like other people. And I am only with Mrs. Betterton because she is my cousin, and I have—no one else.'

It very nearly came then, but they were interrupted by Mrs. Betterton and her Chassee friend coming to tell Lilian about the proposed tea-tasting at Hankow, and possible visit to the brick tea factory, so that it was only as they were nearing Wuhu that Mr. Stuekey, fearing for ever to lose his opportunity, somewhat bolted out his offer, greatly distressing Lilian by so doing. For having once made up his mind to offer, he pleaded his cause very earnestly ; though he took it manfully when she assured him it was impossible for her to entertain any idea of the kind, only saying very firmly, 'I have often thought nothing less than a miracle could make my life in China happy. It was my one chance, and I caught at it.'

'Oh, don't say that—don't say that,' pleaded the girl, her face looking so pitiful in its sorrow for him that he hastened to say cheerily :

'Oh, don't worry about me. I'll be all right. I dare say it is quite as good a life as I'm fit for. If I'd been a very bright boy, you know, I should have gone into something better. And it is—oh, I'll just peg along at Wuhu. I'll peg along all right.'

But as he said good-bye to her, holding her hand in his a little more lingeringly than was quite necessary, 'You won't forget my address,' he said, 'if there is ever anything I can do for you. Wuhu ! like a dog baying at the moon.' Then with a sudden change of tone, 'I wish you'd promise to write to me when you get to Chungking—tell me how you like it—and— and whether you are really all right there.'

'I promise,' said Lilian, her eyes full of tears, looking up beseechingly into his, while her little trembling hand gave his a somewhat lingering pressure.

'A very indelicate proceeding to lose her heart to the first young man she meets, and show it so openly too,' said Miss Neligan to the steamer's first officer, who was hanging over the side with her.

But he did not seem quite to agree with her now. 'Does it not strike you she is like a choice porcelain cup, too good to drink out of?' said he. 'Between you and me, I think the new Commissioner would have liked well enough to have her for his own. But the man's not born yet who is really fit for a wife like that, I reckon.'

Miss Neligan felt a little affronted, but as he went on to intimate that she herself was not too delicate to be used as a drinking cup, she was presently propitiated.

To Lilian's great surprise, Mrs. Betterton seemed to think she had been too hasty in refusing Mr. Stuckey. Had she not been directly questioned about it, she would never have spoken of his offer, regarding his exhibition of feeling as too sacred to be lightly mentioned. But now to her astonishment Mrs. Betterton begged her to reconsider her decision.

'But, cousin Mary, do you respect Mr. Stuckey? Do you think he is a true Christian?' asked the girl, borrowing Mrs. Betterton's own words.

'Who am I that I should judge another?' said Mrs. Betterton, now, however, humbly. 'I exchanged but few words with him. But I saw at once that he was a gentleman and a man of honour. And gentlemen are not so plentiful in China.'

'But, cousin Mary, you would not have me marry him because he is a gentleman—not just any gentleman?'

'I think that Mr. Stuckey, in thinking you might bring happiness into his life, was probably quite correct, and that possibly you could not be better employed. You are clearly bound to undertake some duty in life.'

'If it is my duty to bring happiness into any man's life, I would far rather bring it into Mr. Fortescue's,' said Lilian; then suddenly realised what she had said, as Mrs. Betterton replied drily:

'But what makes you think you could? He has never told you so, has he? However, whilst you feel like that, you clearly cannot marry Mr. Stuckey,' she added. And Lilian went away feeling greatly humbled.

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## CHAPTER VI

## AN AMERICAN BISHOP

His talk is like a stream which runs  
With rapid change from rocks to roses ;  
It slips from politics to puns ;  
It glides from Mahomet to Moses.—PRAED.

“It is in some places ten miles wide, in others eight, in others six, and it is more than 100 days’ journey in length from one end to the other ; it seems, indeed, more like a sea than a river,” said Marco Polo of the Yangtsze River 600 years ago. And in the month of May this description strikes me as decidedly appropriate. As so much of life in China passes on the Yangtsze, it seems as if it ought to be better known ; that though the river has never been properly measured, nor does anyone know where it rises further than that it is somewhere in the mountains of Thibet, yet it is ascertained to have a course of at least 3,000 miles, divides the eighteen provinces of China pretty well into two equal parts, and is navigated by steamers as far as Ichang, 1,000 miles from its mouth, at which place—1,000 miles from the sea—the volume of water of the Yangtsze is 244 times that of the Thames at London Bridge.’ Thus spoke the American Bishop, who came on board at Kiukiang, where one of the Chaszees got off.

Mrs. Betterton, who appeared to be the person addressed, bowed her head. ‘You speak like a book, sir,’ she said.

‘I am writing one,’ replied the Bishop, much gratified. ‘And I think, madam, there must be much valuable assistance you might render me. What, for instance, is the output of silk from the great province of Szechuan, where I hear you reside, and which I understand to be about the same size as France ?’

‘I have really no idea,’ said Mrs. Betterton.

‘What are the other principal exports ?’

‘Musk and medicines,’ said she politely. ‘The medicines come down in bulk, and a pound of raw material is often required to make quite a small dose. Deer’s horns, tigers’ bones, snakes’ skins, and small alligators, and almost everything abnormal in any way counts as a medicine, as I suppose you know. A caterpillar with grass growing out of its head is one of the most valuable, and is sold for its weight in gold, I have been told.’

'I know it,' said the Bishop, promptly making notes.

'Then there is white wax collected off the trees near Omei Shan, having been deposited there by insects, which are born in the great valley on the other side of the Lolos country some 200 miles away, and carried there by coolies with flaming torches running through the night, because they produce more wax on the trees in that district. And there is coffin wood from that same marvellous valley. It is very valuable because it has been buried for hundreds of years, and is dug out of the ground, and extraordinarily hard. Then there is copper, and potash, and—I do not recollect anything more.'

'Thank you, madam. Your information is most valuable and remarkable. About these white wax insects—why are they carried by night?'

'Because they suffer from the heat. It is in the month of April they are yearly transported by hundreds upon hundreds of coolies. The city gates are all left open at that season for the passage of the insects.'

'Remarkable, very! And now may I ask at what cost per head does your mission save souls?'

'Sir, I never counted the cost,' replied Mrs. Betterton with spirit.

'Quite right, madam, quite right! And yet I reckon that statistics are useful, especially when one is writing a book, which is my present business in China. From what I have been able to gather, the China Inland do it at the greatest outlay, while professing to be the cheapest mission in China. The truth is, cheap goods *do not* pay, neither in business nor in religion—not in the long run. I consider the missionary too valuable an article not to be well lodged and well fed. Then let him do the Lord's work to the best of his ability! But how should he preach the Gospel if called away to serve tables? I estimate, however, that the Chinese can be considerably cheaper converted, *considerably* cheaper than you English convert the Jews—1,500 dollars a head, is it not?' he asked, with a twinkle in his eyes. 'But it needs training and organisation. My dear,' turning to Lilian, 'everything in this world needs organisation and training. Ask one of these gentlemen here what they would give for your or my opinion of Keemens! And yet your palate—I say nothing about my own—is likely to be as delicate by nature as any of theirs, and your will might be as good. There is plenty of good will in the world, but sadly much incompetency.'

Thus concluded the American Bishop.

'And may I ask, sir, what advantage you think it would be if the whole Chinese race were converted to-morrow?' asked one of the Chaszees. 'Is the morality of Wall Street higher than that of China?'

'But then think of the advantage of having the whole Chinese race free—to convert Wall Street,' said the Bishop. And they all laughed.

'But I had him there,' growled the Chaszee.

The scenery was grand now, but it felt very hot, and the great river seemed to hold them at too great a distance from its cliffs. It did not keep them too far off from the junks, however, and Lilian felt as if she could never look enough at the junks, with their strangely tall white sails, and brown men sitting beneath them, all stripped to the waist, and so much more like her idea of Otaheitans than Chinese, 'childlike and bland.' They are certainly neither childlike nor bland as one goes up the great river. But the glare from the yellow water was certainly peculiarly trying to the eyes, as she had been told steamer captains found it; and the opium, that came in great wafts from the Chinese passengers, also made her feel a little squeamish.

'It gets stronger and stronger as you go up river,' said that Job's comforter, Mrs. Betterton.

But before they had half done listening to the American Bishop, and being questioned by him, they were arriving at the willow-clad Bund of Hankow. And then the great question was what they were to do with themselves, for the steamer for Ichang, they now learnt, had left the night before, and there would be no other for five days; and there was no European hotel; and the steamer in which they arrived would only remain two nights. There were Chinese inns of course, in plenty, but no one ever suggested them as an even possible place of asylum. 'It is very inconvenient, but so it always is at Hankow,' said Mrs. Betterton, looking with some concern at her party. For herself and her children she had no anxiety—they had their beds, and she was inquiring whether they might be allowed to spread them out in one of the hulks by means of which passengers land at Hankow, when a note arrived for Lilian. The Commissioner of Customs presented his compliments to Miss Grey, and regretted extremely that pressure of work made it impossible for him to leave his office to fetch her, but he sent chairs. He

had heard from Mr. Stuckey that she was a friend of his, and he hoped that she and her friends would treat his house as their home till the steamer took them to Ichang. So Lilian and the Bettertons proceeded in state to the Commissioner's house, whilst the ladies of the party were put up by missionary friends, the captain of the steamer undertaking to arrange for Dr. Maxwell.

'That was very considerate and thoughtful of Mr. Stuckey,' said Mrs. Betterton. 'And somehow I fancy it is eminently characteristic of him, and that we shall find ourselves well cared for in consequence.'

While Lilian, thinking of his 'one chance of happiness,' felt overwhelmed with confusion at being thus indebted to him. But how could she help it? She could not sleep out on the Bund, and the hulk manager had not seemed at all particularly willing to make room for Mrs. Betterton's beds. The worst of it was, she did so decidedly think Mr. Stuckey the nicest man she had yet met, always barring Mr. Fortescue. There was little time for regrets, however. There she was, being danced along by four bearers, in the Commissioner's own grand official chair, among the willows on Hankow's stately Bund. There were six large ocean steamers lying close up along the willows, waiting to carry the tea to the four quarters of the world. There were coolies in a long procession, each with two prettily painted tea-chests dangling from a bamboo pole over his shoulder, all running along at a jog trot and crying out, 'Ah—Hoi! Ah—Hoi!' all the way. There were Chinese tea-men in exquisite brocaded silks and satins, but with yellowpasty faces, being carried along in another procession of little dark-blue sedan chairs with green lattice blinds, and yellow silk curtains half drawn across the front, so as much more to suggest the idea of a veiled lady hurrying to some romantic assignation than a man of business proceeding to a commercial negotiation. And all along one side, each with a little garden in front brimming over with flowers, stood the handsome Hankow houses, that are so over full during the tea season, often empty during the rest of the year; whilst in and out of the crowd wandered the curiously clad Chinese policemen, almost like the knaves in a pack of cards, for ever warning all Chinese off the one walk by the river side, chained in by iron chains, and set out with benches—both walk and benches for the use of Europeans only. And there upon one bench were three European



babies, two European children, and their nurses, with about a hundred Chinese all pressing against the iron chains in one serried mass, held back by them from coming nearer, but all staring at the little fair-faced Europeans in their fresh white frocks, staring the stolid stare that expresses nothing, and becomes so increasingly intolerable the longer one remains in China. Some people say it is that stare that drives the up-country Consuls mad even more than the language. And beyond the children, upon the grass plots between the avenues of willows were European men, walking about in huge sun hats and suits of white duck. After so many Chinese faces, it was quite exhilarating to come upon Europeans again, even though they too looked pasty, and their eyes graver than in England. Lilian hardly felt as if it could be herself as her chair and its four bearers hurried her along the Bund, and then stopping at the Commissioner's house simply turned her out in the hall, and she saw Mrs. Betterton and the children being turned out also. Noiseless, serene-looking Chinese men, in long blue gowns and long pigtails, came forward to receive them, and conduct them to vast bedrooms upstairs; and there they were, at home in Hankow, 600 miles up the Yangtze, about the very central point of the whole vast, blue-gowned Empire!

What a sensation it would have made in Hankow two days earlier—a girl, a new girl straight out from England, and an heiress! But the tea market had opened the day before, and men were so busy backing their luck or judgment, they had not a thought to spare; not even the Commissioner of Customs, who was new to his post, although he had put his house at their disposal, Mr. Stuckey's note seeming to him to render this imperative under the circumstances. 'Any attention you can show to Miss Grey I shall esteem as shown to myself. She is young, rich, lovely and charming, travelling with her cousin, Mrs. Betterton, a most ardent missionary.' 'Oh, he is going to marry her, of course,' thought the Commissioner. 'Lucky fellow! Rich *and* lovely!' And when Mr. Stuckey wrote this note, he had hoped he might be. But he had posted it after she had refused him. He was, as Mrs. Betterton had divined, very considerate of others.

All the rooms at the Commissioner's house looked enormous after two months of cabin life, as if whole regiments might encamp in each; but they were surprisingly little furnished,

and it was here and now that Lilian became aware of the mutability of life in China. The Commissioner had arrived two weeks before, and the Consul and his wife were leaving the week following. Their auction was the subject of the day, everyone intending to supplement their deficiencies at it.

‘My predecessor only moved to Kiukiang, so he took his things with him. That is the reason you find me so badly supplied,’ explained their host, when he made his appearance at luncheon time. ‘We all auction our things whenever we go on leave in China, and buy our furniture not to please ourselves, but its possible future purchasers. I went to two auctions in Shanghai on my return to China, and then I heard of this one coming off at the Consulate here, and I thought I might as well save carriage and wait for it. But this time I am giving myself a treat, as my wife is away. You see I have got a revolving bookcase, and I have ordered myself a revolving reading desk. There are to be three shelves, each will revolve, and each is to be big enough to hold open upon it a dictionary, the Chinese book I may be reading, *and* my notes, with a special place for the inkstand and pen-rest. It is an extravagance, but it will be the comfort of my life.’

‘And will travel with you till your dying day,’ said Mrs. Betterton. ‘That will not figure at your auction, I suppose?’

‘No—no,’ hesitated the Commissioner, who looked as plump and comfortable as a partridge. ‘It will not be portable. I could not face my wife with a piece of furniture so unportable as my ideal reading desk will be.’

‘But it might be put together with screws, and screw and unscrew.’

‘My dear madam, you know Chinese carpenters and Chinese wood. Anything that can come to pieces will come to pieces in China. No, I am not ordering it at Hall and Holtz’s, but in Hankow. I am having it made in the Chinese city by my measurements, and under my personal supervision. Besides, I do not specially wish that my wife should see my reading desk. She thinks already I spend too much upon my hobbies. I have decided to enter my reading desk in my accounts as tables. It will be three tables, all I shall require. Mrs. Berner will not think the sum too much for three tables for this large apartment.’

It appeared the Commissioner was a German of vast knowledge and profound erudition, and this accounted for an occa-

sional oddity of phrase in the midst of the very choice English he usually spoke. Whether it also accounted for his apparently laughing at himself, as he thus unfolded his scheme for hoodwinking his wife, they did not know. Her photograph occupied the place of honour in his drawing-room, and it seemed that she was now parted from him for the first time in order to superintend the education of their children at home, as also further to recuperate her constitution, somewhat broken down by a lengthened residence in the East.

'Mrs. Berner is happier at Dresden than she could be here during the summer months. But I write her long letters,' explained the Commissioner. 'That is really the reason I have no time for anything else. It takes so much longer to explain everything in writing to one's wife than in conversation. I find it indeed a great tax upon my time; for Mrs. Berner would not feel satisfied if she did not know all the details. That is the reason I must ask you to excuse me now.'

They thought it must indeed take up a great deal of his time, if about many things he had to think out such an elaborate scheme of subterfuge as about the reading desk.

After all, the next up-river boat put off its departure for Ichang, and then it turned out a Chinese mandarin laid claim to all available accommodation upon it; so the missionary party stayed ten days at Hankow. Those ten days were a most agreeable interlude to Lilian. Only Mrs. Betterton fretted, saying every day the river was rising, and it might become impossible for them to proceed to Chungking before the autumn. There was also another subject of annoyance when Miss Neligan announced her engagement to the first officer of the steamer they had come up in. 'Not even a missionary!' the others remarked sadly. Of course, the first officer was told he must refund her passage money to the Society that had sent her out, but this he professed himself quite prepared to do.

'Well, I expect the mission is well rid of her,' said Mrs. Betterton, after a pause for reflection. 'And after all I dare say she won't make him a bad sort of wife.'

'Darn his socks and that sort of thing,' suggested the German Commissioner with a smile.

'By the way, my dear, I was pleased to see how neatly you darn,' said Mrs. Betterton, turning to Lilian. 'But was it worth while to bring stockings with so many holes all the way from England with you?'

'They weren't mine,' said Lilian, blushing. 'They were dreadful, weren't they! But Miss Neligan said she couldn't be bothered to mend them. And she did not seem to have very many, so I was trying to put them in order for her.'

'So she won't even darn his socks for him,' laughed the Commissioner. 'Now Mrs. Berner not only darns all mine when we are together, but she insists that no one else is to darn them for me while she is away. So I am in some puzzlement now, although plentifully supplied to start with—yes, to start with,' murmured the Commissioner. 'But how to continue——'

Miss Grey, however, and, by reason of her chaperonage of Miss Grey, Mrs. Betterton also, had been received into what may be called Hankow society, into which missionaries do not usually enter; so that Miss Neligan's engagement took rather a more subsidiary place than it otherwise might have. The ladies were not as busy as the men, and all the society ladies had called, including even the wife of the Consul, who was going away. This was not quite so overwhelming as perhaps it may sound, seeing there were but five of them. There had been six, Dr. Berner explained, but one was in England awaiting pending divorce proceedings, 'which may or may not come off,' as he hastened to add. 'Meanwhile the other five are barely on speaking terms, being divided into two camps, as to whether there should or should not be a divorce. I have called upon them all, and you see they all call upon you as friends of Stuckey's, and my guests. The crucial moment, however, will be at the races, when I shall have to decide whether to take in Mrs. G. J. Smith or Mrs. Robinson to the race tiffin. The question of precedence is the root of the dispute between them. And the worst of it is, Mrs. Robinson would forgive me if I took in Mrs. Smith, but Mrs. Smith would never forgive me if I took in Mrs. Robinson. Yet I cannot feel any doubt in my own mind but that it is Mrs. Robinson I ought to take. It is on occasions like this that I so greatly miss Mrs. Berner.'

'When are the races?' asked Mrs. Betterton.

'The next races will not take place till the autumn,' said Dr. Berner simply. 'The spring races are just over. On that occasion all went well. Mrs. G. J. Smith had a slight attack of fever.'

'Let us hope, then, Mrs. Robinson may have fever next time,' suggested Mrs. Betterton.

'No. Such strokes of fortune never repeat themselves,' pro-

tested the doctor. 'But I am prepared for the worst. And should there be no other way out of it, I am determined to take to my bed myself and devolve the scrape upon some other man—subject always to Mrs. Berner's approval. I have written, laying the whole matter before her, by the last mail. That will just enable me to get her reply before the races recur again. In cases like these it is always better to be forearmed. But I do not precisely remember what she said about my socks. There was to be a sequence, I know.'

At that moment, however, the American Bishop was announced. He was brought in to be introduced by his Consul, and after the first exchange of formalities at once proceeded to make the best use of his opportunities. 'Can you inform me, sir, as to the output of medicines from the vast province of Szechuan? I am informed that they are one of the largest articles of commerce, and come down in bulk, a pound of raw material being sometimes barely sufficient for a dose.'

'I make no doubt you have been correctly informed, sir, and I will gladly furnish you with a copy of my predecessor's report, together with the customs statistics. As to the overland traffic, that avoids our customs by either paying at the native Likin stations, or by being smuggled—with regard to that I can furnish you with no information whatever.'

'Thank you, sir. My obligations, I'm sure, will be infinite to you. Can you, sir, inform me what is the value of silk exported from——'

'No, sir, I cannot. Neither that nor anything else. But you will find it all in the customs statistics. So far as they go, they are most accurately kept, and a mine of useful information for those who can make use of it. When I have been here a year I shall draw up my own report, and shall laboriously insert in it every smallest shred of fact that the most voracious devourer of data could desire. But not the Inspector-General himself could compel me to burden my mind with such chaff, which, as soon as I have acquired, I disgorge in a report, and straightway forget till the year after. Now, if you want information about the Chow dynasty—— The Chow are my delight, my hobby. Subsequent to the Han dynasty I know nothing.'

But, somewhat to the relief of the others, the Bishop said the Chows were wanting in actuality, and he did not require

facts about prehistoric periods ; but he and his Consul would be delighted to escort Miss Grey to a lawn tennis party instead. Lilian was asked to tennis parties every day, and one day she had ridden into the flat, flat country that surrounds Hankow on all sides but the river, the most desolate, *unmade*-looking country that probably ever was inhabited and tilled and treated as made. It is indeed all under water every summer after the rains, and at the best of times is almost more water than land, having till a very recent period probably formed the bed of one of the great lakes now drained by the River Yangtze. The China ponies, with their apparently rooted dislike to their European riders, were an amusement to Lilian, but otherwise she had not much cared for her ride. The tennis she enjoyed. But what especially amused her was seeing how proud each lady was of the number of ladies at her party. 'I had seven ladies at my afternoon,' boasted one, 'and five actually played.' Men they never counted. There were so many up just then in connection with the tea season, and sometimes one came, and sometimes another, just as suited business. One lady had invited Lilian to see her new dresses just arrived from England, by way of a lively and novel amusement. She had then proceeded to offer to show what she called her jewels, but this Lilian had managed to escape.

'I thought that was what ladies in harems amused themselves with,' she said afterwards. 'I had no idea anyone else did. And they seemed so absurdly smart for the place. I cannot think what anyone wants with such dresses where there are so few people. Surely a very simple little evening dress would be enough for any party that could take place at Hankow?'

'You forget that Mrs. G. J. Smith wants to cut out Mrs. Robinson. And Mrs. Robinson must outshine Mrs. G. J. If the ladies would combine and pledge themselves all to look upon life as a calico ball, it would be a great relief to their husbands' purses. But women won't combine.'

'That is a very good idea,' said Mrs. Betterton, nodding approvingly. 'Henceforward I look upon life as a calico ball.'

'It is not my own,' said the Commissioner modestly. 'It is a much cleverer man's than I am, the cleverest man in the English Consular Service. He is full of such conceits. I quite hoped to have seen Fortescue here. But no ; he must have passed down river as I came up, and be in Japan by

now. Ah! now that is a man! It is not my fault if the facts that I accumulate with my German thoroughness stick out in my style like the plums in a German pudding, here one and there another. I none the less admire your English pudding—all plums—and that is Mr. Fortescue. Even his lightest play of words gives matter for reflection. The paper he read at your Geographical, was it not consummate? What other man could write a masterpiece like that?’

‘I heard he had been ill?’ asked Lilian eagerly. Here at last was a man who seemed to think as she did of Claude Fortescue, her ‘dear Gardie’s nephew,’ the one person in China connected with her past life.

‘Oh, yes,’ said Dr. Berner, as if that were a matter of course, and of no account. ‘He is on sick leave. Otherwise he would not have been entitled so soon to another holiday. Oh, to a man of that delicate organisation, that subtlety of brain, it was rank cruelty to send him back to solitary confinement at Chungking.’

‘Yet he spoke so much of the beauty of the scenery—of the delights of travelling about the province.’

‘Ah! you know him! Yes, for once that is very well. But he nearly broke down the first time. He travelled home through Siberia to restore his nerves—break himself in gradually—dared not face England at once. He was sadly changed when he came down river. And yet what an account that was of his trip through Siberia! So pithy! So short! Blagoverschentzk! a town to swear by, if you can but once pronounce its name. Ah! ha! ha!’ laughed the Commissioner, ‘Japan will set him up again.’

Mrs. Betterton almost said, ‘Thank Heaven.’

## CHAPTER VII

### LONG AGO

The god in him hath taken unto wife  
 A daughter of the pit, and—strongly bound  
 By coils of snake-like hair about him wound—  
 Dies straining hard to raise the severing knife.

J. A. NOBLE.

IF there was one thing Mrs. Betterton dreaded more than another, it was that she should be the means of bringing

Lilian Grey and Claude Fortescue together. If they met without her; or in spite of her, she could not help it. In that case she could but ask for guidance as to what it would be then right for her to do. But to be herself the means of bringing them together was a terrible idea to her, for never could she hear his name mentioned but the memory of one scene recurred to her mind. Whilst they were both living in Chungking, the sole representatives in those days of any Christian country among that great community of non-Christians, she had heard that he had taken a Chinese girl to live with him in his Consulate, and it had been borne in upon her as a sacred duty, both as Christian and as English-woman—and yet more specially as a mother—to go and remonstrate with him. So she had ordered round a sedan chair, and, with blinds close drawn and curtains down, been borne through narrow, crowded streets, jostled by coolies and by shopkeepers for a good half-hour before she had reached the Consulate, in its narrow street, with its dark, picturesque courtyards, and been ushered into the consular drawing-room or office; a long, narrow room, one side all paper windows, with three office desks as its principal furniture, the walls well lined with the high, narrow bookcases, introduced by Sir Thomas Wade, that serve as packing cases when not used as bookshelves. Claude Fortescue had been sitting at the most distant desk of the three, writing. He had risen hurriedly on hearing her announced, and came the length of the room, rather effusively, to greet her. Poor Mrs. Betterton's firmness had begun to give way before his friendly greeting and those strangely sympathetic eyes of his. She felt her courage deserting her, and therefore spoke the more abruptly: 'Claude Fortescue, I am come to remonstrate with you.'

Only a faint shadow of surprise passed over his expressive features. 'But you will do so so much more comfortably, seated,' he said, pushing forward an armchair.

'No, I shall not,' said she resolutely, yet at once feeling that she had begun in the wrong way. 'I am come to plead with you,' she corrected herself. An expression of insufferable annoyance passed over his face.

'You know, I see, of what I have come to speak to you. My husband and I left England years ago to preach the pure Gospel of Christ's teaching among the heathen. With what effect can we do so? What good result can we expect from our labours, whilst one of our own countrymen, the very repre-



sentative of our country here, is leading an ungodly life, in defiance of God and man ?'

'My dear lady, I am leading a very quiet life—at least I was,' with a faint smile, 'till you stormed my citadel.'

'Have you considered what you are doing ?'

'I have certainly had plenty of time.' The weariness of his tone appealed to her heart. But she was too nervous, too full of her own effort, to respond to it.

'And your mother——'

'My mother is dead. We will leave her out of this conversation, if you please.'

'Do you think that, whilst you are living in open sin with this poor, ignorant girl, this is a house for missionaries to go in and out of ?'

'That is the last thing that I desire,' said he, almost under his breath, yet audibly.

'Claude Fortescue, you will regret this step that you have taken more bitterly than you have any idea of.'

'Very likely. Life in China is all regrets.'

'Young man, I grieve to hear it. I grieve for you, indeed I do.'

'I make no doubt you do, and I am very sorry. And now, Mrs. Betterton, does it not strike you that you have been interfering in my affairs in what you must yourself acknowledge to be an unjustifiable fashion ? What I am doing concerns myself alone.'

'It does not—it does not,' protested Mrs. Betterton. 'That is just where you young men make such a mistake. You think it is only your own affair if you degrade yourselves. You injure all women by so doing—you injure Christ ! In especial you injure all those who love you—the girl you marry—the children yet unborn——'

'My dear lady, I shall never marry. Really, Mrs. Betterton, your lively imagination runs away with you.'

'And have you no respect for God's Word—His express command ?'

'I am not satisfied as to the authenticity of what you probably call God's Word. My position at present hardly offers any opportunity for collating the ancient manuscripts. I am, on the other hand, admirably situated for the study of the works of one of the wisest men that ever lived, and if I am guided by the teachings of Confucius I do not think I shall go far astray. In trying to arrive at their true

meaning I find this poor, ignorant girl, as you call her, of inestimable service. But I have not offered to introduce her to you, and I should have preferred that she should have remained unnamed between us.'

'Mr. Fortescue, you are a clever man of the world. But you know what I want to say to you,' cried the poor lady then, quite broken down by the strain upon her nerves, and the long fatigue of standing. Yet she would not give in and sit down.

'Yes, I do,' said he suddenly, looking her right in the eyes, and speaking in quite a different tone. 'And I have thought it all out before—over and over again! But you have made a great effort to come and see me. I wish you would allow me to offer you a glass of wine. You won't? Well, then, under the circumstances, don't you think you have said all that duty demands of you, and that you are not bound any longer to remain in a house which, as you say, is no fit place for missionaries to go in and out of?' And so saying, he actually bowed her out, though opening the door for her, and seeing her into her chair as politely as possible.

She had let her curtain down again, and had a good cry behind it. But she never knew the agony of soul with which Claude Fortescue went back to his lonely office drawing-room. To him the whole proceeding on Mrs. Betterton's part had been highly indelicate, laying bare things which he thought should never have been even touched upon between them. He had but just bought the girl of the terrible old woman who had owned her. She had been a slave, and after months of worry he had but just concluded the transaction nominally making her his property, but really giving her her freedom. If it had not been so, perhaps everything might have been different. But as it was, what could he do with her? He could neither turn her adrift upon the world, nor return her to her late vile owner. Whilst heaping adjectives upon the horrible-looking, close-bargaining old woman, it had never occurred to him that her start in life had been like that of the young girl's—that given luck, survival, and no exceptional circumstances, the one insensibly led to the other. But till now his own conduct had seemed somewhat heroic in his own eyes, and he had taken vast comfort to himself, thinking how much better the girl's position was than that from which he had removed her. Now all on a sudden he saw his own conduct with Mrs. Betterton's eyes, with his mother's eyes,

with his aunt—Miss Gardiner's eyes, and he cursed himself in the bitterness of his soul.

He had been living with the same Chinese girl up to the time when Mrs. Betterton had last heard of him as paying for her to be taken care of when he left for England. She had borne him a child, and when he started for Siberia there had been some little difficulty about placing her and her child somewhere in Shanghai, which had brought them to Mrs. Betterton's notice once more. She could not make up her mind to tell the truth to Lilian Grey—doubted, indeed, whether it would be possible to make the girl understand if she did ; but she saw that Lilian had been greatly taken with him, and she did not wonder at it. He was very taking. The link of his aunt, her guardian, now dead, was also a strong natural link. Mrs. Betterton had greatly dreaded her meeting him again. Now she hoped she never would. But all the same she regretted Mr. Stuckey. He had seemed as if he might be such a safe husband for Lilian, and the girl had decidedly appeared to like him. Why had she regarded it as so out of the question when he had asked her to marry him ?

Meanwhile Miss Neligan was playing the part of *enfant terrible* in Hankow society. She said to Mrs. G. J. Smith, 'What a dear, sweet woman Mrs. Robinson is !' and she told Mrs. Robinson that now she was ceasing to be a missionary she expected to be received in society, but that she should never—no, never—forget the extreme attention Mrs. G. J. Smith had shown her whilst still supposing her to belong to the missionary body. In reality the poor thing was desperate to get some one to invite her to stay, and offer to give her wedding breakfast. To Lilian she said, 'Oi never knew the Chinese were that brown. And Oi think it perfectly disgusting, such a lot of naked men, and the opium, and all ! Oi was quite prepared to be a missionary, but Oi draw the line at indecency. And Oi wonder at you, Miss Grey, that Oi do, going on into the interior now, when you begin to know what it is like. Oi don't think it is the place for an unmarried female. But of course you could not help it if Mr. Stuckey would not offer. You did your best, poor dear, and Mrs. Betterton was that kind. Oi was astonished at her, Oi was indeed. Oi shouldn't have thought it of her, and that gave me more confidence to approach her about me own affair.' It was in these terms Miss Neligan always spoke of her engagement and approaching wedding.

## CHAPTER VIII

FROM THE HANKOW COMMISSIONER'S POINT OF VIEW.

‘There is more of psychology and logic to be gathered from the pictorial representation of thought in China than from many lengthy treatises on the origin of language and the classification of concepts.’—  
MAX MÜLLER.

FOR once at least in the existence of Hankow the missionary world all flowed in and out of the Commissioner's portals, and made itself quite at home in the Commissioner's house. Dr. Berner was delighted. ‘Men of the highest intellectual acquirements I have met since I have been in China. And such a knowledge of the Chinese colloquial too, and of Chinese customs! I am sure I am immensely indebted to you, my dear Mrs. Betterton, for this introduction of a humble layman within the sacred circles!’ The whole party went to dinner one night at a missionary's house, and wrote nonsense verses after dinner, and greatly enjoyed themselves. But here it would perhaps be more convenient to give an extract from the voluminous correspondence the Commissioner carried on with his wife, who would not be satisfied without all the details.

‘Hardly arrived here, my house has been subject to an invasion. Behold your somewhat free-thinking husband entertaining the most ardent of missionaries, surrounded by the whole saintly society of Hankow, Hanyang, and Wuchang, the three towns that here meet, and enjoying himself excessively. It is that fellow Stuckey who is at the bottom of it. He is very naturally in love with Miss Grey. She is not a missionary, only travelling with them, the good God knows wherefore. She is the most elegant bit of porcelain ever manufactured in Dresden, only better. What the Creator means by turning out such fine handiwork, He knows, I am sure I don't. “A creature not too bright, too good, for human nature's daily food,” is my idea. (And that reminds me, my best loved one, what didst thou say I was to do with my socks, those that showed signs of decay? I know it was to be *seriatim*—there was to be a sequence of some sort, but what it was to be has quite passed from thy poor husband's bewildered brain! See what it is to be without a wife to jog my elbow!) Now this Miss Grey, of whom I was writing, is a great deal too refined, too high-life-looking for daily life. She

is very clever too, astonishingly clever : not only talks French and German well, but is somewhat versed in the literatures of both countries, and assimilates everything told her, showing intelligent interest. I have taken her into the Chinese city, and it has been a *pleasure* ; she sees the beauty of the roof curves, and is not absorbed by the dirt to the ignoring of that most interesting panorama of the Dark Ages, which one here sees unrolled and living before one as nowhere else in the nineteenth century. She both uses her eyes and can listen. But to see her play lawn tennis—that is when one wonders what the Lord Almighty meant by turning out such handiwork. Her poise ! Her movements ! You know my admiration for the antique ! Well, only the Naples Psyche or the Apollo could compete with her for natural grace. But I must not write more of her, or thou wilt think I am in love. Impossible ! she is chastity itself. I could as soon fall in love with the Psyche. Mrs. Betterton, her cousin, is the impassioned missionary. She is one of the most superior women I have ever come across, a thorough lady, of independent means. Why she—or any of them, indeed—feels this call to China, to convert pigtailed heads, rather than beef-fed wife-beaters at home, passes my understanding. But it seems that she and her husband—now in heaven—came out to China, when they first married, and when the first missionaries affronted much. They tell me he was an angel man. There are two children—the veriest drolls ! Their amusement is preaching and playing at being converted. What their serious studies are, thy correspondent knoweth not, but shrewdly suspecteth the multiplication table, which indeed to the childish brain must be as hard as logarithms to us. Thanks to these ladies, I have made the acquaintance of the missionary world here. There are truly saintly sowers of the seed among them. But the soil of China is ungrateful. Thou knowest my opinion on this missionary question, so I will write of it no further. The last news in the community is there is to be no divorce ! Mrs. G. J. Smith is furious. She says there will be no living in Hankow if—&c. Thou thyself canst imagine the rest. We dined the other night at the English Consulate, a delightful evening ! Truly all must regret the departure of this most amiable family. Everyone intends to see them off. They have a sofa of which I should much like to become possessed. Wert thou here I should not hesitate. Tea prospects are bad so far, and the Chaszees seem depressed. Only the

Russians are buying so far, and at extravagant prices. No one can hope to compete with them, so the others are at present only waiting till the Russians are done buying. Two men were very drunk at the Club the only night I have been there. But truly this Hankow is the most hard-drinking port in China. Tea they only talk about, and buy, or don't buy. I have conceived a project for a new book, and am very happy in the thought of it, but delay its inception till my guests leave me. Tell me how Friedchen progresses with her music. Does Carl work at his studies right diligently? And above all write me word how thou art thyself. Is the poison of this deleterious climate wearing out its influence over thy hard-wrung nerves? And does the doctor hold forward any hope of thy being able to rejoin me in the autumn? If unable to come, would lace from the convent here help thee to furnish forth some winter gowns? It is very cheap, if regarded as lace. Mrs. G. J. Smith says it is too coarse. But Mrs. Robinson wears a flounce on a grey satin, and looks quite imposing in it. And I incline to her taste in dress, and think thou wouldst too.

*'Tuesday*—My guests leave me on Thursday. I shall greatly miss them. Poor Phillips is dead. If only he had gone home! This fatal, fatal climate! It has cast a gloom over everything. Liver, of course! And his family left badly provided for after all these years of patient toil! They are to go home by the next steamer, as one of the children is ailing, and the doctor says must not risk the heat. Phillips and I came out to China together twenty years ago. I have decided not to bid for that sofa. The great thing is to save money and retire as early as one can. I feel very uneasy about some of our investments. Consult thy cousin Siegfried, and make use of that power of attorney I gave thee, if necessary,' &c. &c.

They were actually getting away from Hankow at last, going on into the interior, really the interior this time—no one ever calls Hankow the interior, though it is as near the middle as can be of the great Chinese Empire. Lilian was conscious of feeling nervous for the first time. The upper river steamer looked strangely small. It was dark night when they went off to it. The getting off to it at all had been a work of difficulty, first through that very dirty street of the Chinese city no member of the European community ever enters, except those on the staff of the Chinese Customs going

to and fro as far as their office ; then down a steep dark flight of slippery steps to the water's edge, across pontoons, up slanting boards, across the hulk, then, alas ! down again, not up. The steamer looked alarmingly small in comparison with the hulk it lay alongside of. Dr. Berner saw them off. At the last moment an idea occurred to him. 'If Miss Grey changes her mind at Ichang, if she feels nervous or unwell, just send her down to me by the next steamer. I will make arrangements for her,' said he to Mrs. Betterton.

'You don't think her looking ill, do you ?' asked the other in sudden alarm.

'She looks strangely white, does she not ?' said the Commissioner. 'A spirit form !'

'Lilian, my dear, you are not feeling ill, are you ? You can eat, can't you, as the Chinese always ask ?'

'I can eat,' replied Lilian, laughing at the abruptness of the question, 'though perhaps not quite such a quantity as the hospitality of Hankow tries to force upon me.'

'In China the body demands more nourishment,' said Dr. Berner, 'the air not containing the same amount of nutriment as in Europe.'

'Do you think that really is so ?' asked Mrs. Betterton. 'My dear husband always thought people overcharged their digestions.'

'Your good husband died in China, my dear Mrs. Betterton. I have got to live here for my wife and children's sake. I have to keep myself nourished. By the way, I have just heard some news that will, I fear, distress you greatly. Stuckey has developed abscesses of the liver, and is ordered home. It is all that Hoihow. If he had but taken my advice ! No man after having had fever at Hoihow is fit to remain there, and then to accept an appointment on the Yangtze.'

'I am very sorry,' said Mrs. Betterton, whilst Lilian looked still more so. 'Abscesses of the liver ! that is serious.'

'Pretty well. He'll never be the same man again. But he has an iron constitution to start with, has Stuckey. All I know is the I.-G. has telegraphed to him to leave at once for Shanghai without waiting for a substitute. There is certainly no one more careful of his subordinates than the great Sir Robert, who has the giving away of more excellent houses and handsome incomes than any other man in the world.

Ah ! if I can but only outlive him and write the great man's biography ! The ransacking of Sir Robert Hart's papers would make it worth having spent the best part of life in China. But there'll be none to ransack, I fear ; he'll destroy them ! Or, worse still, write his own autobiography, and pose singlehanded and alone dead as alive. That small man is the greatest personality of the age. But woe betide you if you offend the man, who must die Lord Protector of China, or he will have lived in vain.'

'Sir Robert Hart, with his Chinese Customs Service, composed of all the natives of the earth except the Chinese, seems to be a glorified Marquis of Carabbas,' said Lilian.

'Very much glorified. Say rather a second Emperor of Russia, unalloyed by fear of assassination, and with an always full exchequer. But possibly I see him bigger than the world sees, being of his satellites. And there is one of my myrmidons pronouncing your papers in order. You are free to go. And I must take my leave. My dear ladies, a pleasant voyage to you ! And if you confer half as much of happiness upon the Chinese as you have upon your humble servant, believe me your coming to China will not have been in vain.'

No wonder Lilian pronounced people in China very kind. 'And the men all seem so clever, and talk about such interesting subjects,' she added. 'The size of the country seems to make all the subjects big.'

'Good-bye, my dear young lady, and may the Lord go with you ! You are going forth into untrodden paths. May the Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon you ! And *if* you ever *do* arrive at the approximate cost per head of converting a soul to Christ in your mission, and could let me know before my book comes out, this is my publisher's address, and will always find me.'

And there stood the American Bishop, and a whole gathering of missionary friends. They prayed together, and then they parted.

'And Oi hope you don't think very meanly of me,' said the weeping Miss Neligan, 'but Oi never had any idea that the Chinese had such brown bodies, and went that naked like savages. And Mr. FitzHugh is the civilest-spoken man, and it is a great comfort to think you'll be provided for for life. Oi, too, that never had a penny ! And won't you take a little quinine, my dear ? for you do look so uncommonly like fever coming on, and they say it is the only preservative.'



Then Miss Neligan's embraces were cut short. And presently there was a waving of handkerchiefs, and a calling of good-byes through the night as the little steamer moved away. Then the lights of the foreign settlement became visible, shining out among the willows, making the flowery pavilions, as the Chinese call the settlement, look like a ball-room lit and garlanded. Hankow is very flat, and the native city very dirty and rowdy, but certainly there the Europeans have done all they could for themselves.

'Now there is only Ichang, then farewell to European civilisation,' said Mrs. Betterton. 'I don't count that we have really started for Chungking till we leave Ichang behind us.'

'Oh, cousin Mary, and we have been travelling for such a long, long time! It seems as if we never could get back again, not if we wished it ever so much.'

'Are you afraid, my child?'

'No—no, not afraid exactly. Chungking seems to get farther and farther away, as one goes on, and travels over the distance.'

'It is very far away, 1,500 miles from Shanghai, and that is 12,000 miles from London, and the last 500 miles from Ichang to Chungking will probably take us as long as the whole 12,000 miles from London.'

'Oh, cousin Mary, I think China is too big—too overwhelmingly big. And I am so sorry for Mr. Stuckey. Do you think I could—could have done anything?'

'No, my dear, not even your love could have saved him from abscesses of the liver if he was going to have them. And I remember now he did look very much like it, sadly much like it. I thought it was the fever he had had. But I see now it was this coming on.'

Mrs. Betterton, however, felt relieved. For a moment a pang of anguish had wrung her heart, that it was not so much because China was so big, but because she never met Claude Fortescue, that Lilian was unhappy.

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## CHAPTER IX

## AT A MISSION STATION

'You who have resided so long in China will readily acknowledge the picture to be taken from nature.'—GOLDSMITH'S *Citizen of the World*.

THERE never was much of interest in the voyage between Hankow and Ichang, even in old days, before the new cut-off was scooped out by the river, and whilst steamers still passed beside Shihshow, the city of many temples on a hill. There is the city of the many pagodas. There is the city with the picturesque water-gate, through which the crowd is for ever streaming to fill its water buckets, like the procession upon Keats' 'Grecian Urn.' And before that there is the opening to the Tungting Lake, suggesting infinite possibilities in the yet unopened-up vista of Hunan, the province from which the braves and the ministers of China come ; the province that of late also has sent out the hideous anti-Christian literature. But with the one exception of that hill at Shihshow the country is flat, and there seem to be three equally mud-coloured expanses, the river, the plainland, and the sky. Nevertheless, to Lilian there was a great fascination about sitting in her cabin, seeing the Chinese scenes pass by, all framed in the doorway. To avoid the current in mid-stream, the little upper river steamer followed all the windings of the river, creeping along by the shore ; thus they looked close into the Chinese villages, seeing here a merry-making, there a funeral. In one place was a triumphal arch, and soldiers posted all along the shore, looking like merryandrews, with their loose gaudy-coloured jackets, each with its breastplate of big characters in front, and looking the more like merry-andrews that each soldier carried a flag somewhat bigger than himself. Evidently some great mandarin was expected, and the bright colours of the soldiers made a welcome relief ; though at other times the various tones of brown and the blue cottons of the peasants made a very pleasing only somewhat sober harmony, rendered still further sober by the dullness of the atmosphere.

'And we know nothing of their hopes and fears, their joys and sorrows ! We just look in upon them as we pass along. It seems so like life,' said the girl. 'All a passing along and taking no part !'

'My dear, you have been travelling a long while,' said Mrs. Betterton.

'I doubt if we are ever meant to take a part in the life of these idolators,' said Miss Frost in her strong Scotch tones. 'We have come here as beings from another sphere, and all that we have got to say to them is, "Come ye out from among them."'

Then, while Lilian looked distressed, Mrs. Betterton said, 'That is the true missionary spirit. Come ye out, for why will ye too perish? Come out and worship the living God.'

'If you had been over to that town across the Yangtze, just opposite to Hankow, and seen that awful temple,' said Miss Frost, 'full of the most hideous idols, and the hell torments the Chinese seem to expect—such dreadful, dreadful torments—you would feel that the only true charity is to call upon them to renounce their imaginations.'

'I have seen the Dutch pictures which they painted when the Duke of Alva was torturing them so cruelly in the name of the Christian religion,' said Lilian with a shudder. 'And I never see idols, as you call them, I only see images, as I do in Roman Catholic churches; only the Chinese treat theirs with much less respect. I don't like images; but I like pictures in stained glass, and crosses. And you don't, I know. You like texts all about in very spidery characters, and with flowers twined about them, so that they are difficult to read. Is it not all a great deal just a matter of taste?'

Mrs. Betterton looked at the girl. She knew without being told that this was what Claude Fortescue said.

'But, cousin Lilian, opium is such a very bad taste,' said little Mark Betterton, 'and our Christians never smoke opium. Some of the Catholics do, but not ours. And I think that much better.'

'So do I, dear Mark,' said Lilian, kissing the little fellow's fair cheek. It was strange to look at the child and see the born missionary. Whether at home or abroad, that child, if he lived, must preach the Gospel to heathen, and the pure candid soul that looked out of his earnest eyes would look out of them and plead with the world, till life closed them. He was the image of his father, people told Lilian, and everyone said the same thing, that the late Mr. Betterton had been an angelic character. They only wondered that he had ever been sufficiently human to marry anyone.

'I don't think,' said Dr. Maxwell gravely, 'that Miss

Grey has as yet sufficiently appreciated the immense waste of life in China.'

It was the first complete sentence she had ever heard him utter.

'I have naturally made it my duty to visit all the hospitals I have come across, and without entering into details such as might be calculated to distress a young lady, I can only say I am appalled at the amount of unrelieved suffering, and at the absolutely wanton waste of life I find on all sides. If the moral or spiritual sufferings of the Chinese are at all commensurate to those of their bodies, which does not seem to me at all an unreasonable supposition, I cannot see how we should be justified in withholding from them the benefit of our somewhat more advanced spirituality, more ripened knowledge. We are ourselves but as children feeling dimly after the great truths of nature so far. Even the law of gravity, Newton's great discovery, is but a rule, it is not an explanation. But yet what we have we can give, just as, if a man is suffering from fever, I can administer quinine, although I may not know how it acts.'

Lilian's attention was arrested at once by the thoughtfulness and unassuming sincerity of the speaker, who had always hitherto left others to talk in her presence. But the jealousy of the captain was aroused. He liked to be cock of the walk in his own steamer.

'Ay, and apply the stomach pump in an overdose of opium case. I should like to know what good you missionaries think you do by bringing back to life a wretch who has felt himself unfit to live.'

'As to the fitness to live of my patients, a doctor would indeed be in a quandary who attempted to settle that, whether in Scotland or here. What do you think yourself, captain, of a case of delirium tremens?'

'I don't think drinking is half as bad as this disgusting opium smoking,' said the captain. 'It is the most degrading habit a man can take to, and more unmans him than any other. There's my comprador smoking now! I can smell him, the sickening, stinking, crawling villain! And if I go down and speak to him, he'll say it is some mandarin, or "good friendee." There's no mandarin on board this time, thank goodness. But I no more dare interfere with that fellow. You think I am captain of this steamer. No, I am not. It is that Chineese comprador of mine, who knows no more about

steamers than that cat does—not so much, indeed, for she is born in one. But he has loaded her down to eight feet, and we shall stick, you'll see we shall, for all they say the river is rising so fast. There has been no rain to speak of up country yet, and that is where the water comes from. I don't believe we shall find the river at Ichang any higher than when we left there last trip. But Mr. Minister of Foreign Affairs, as they call him at Hankow, the Chinese clerk, who talks to Europeans, he comes to me rubbing his hands, and saying, "You think she'll do, captain? you think she'll do?" and when I say, "No, she won't, not at eight feet," there comes my comprador behind my back, as cool as a cucumber and as saucy as a dish of curry. "Can do," he says. And they have loaded her. Oh, yes! I can report him, and get reported myself for the Lord knows what, and be given the sack too. But I know better than that. And there's my gentleman smoking away now. May he smoke himself sick! that's what I say, and Amen! And if he gives himself an overdose of opium, don't you stomach-pump him, whatever you do! We shall stick, you'll see."

And stick they did, which Lilian found meant going ashore. She now learnt also that it was only the steamers were allowed to go ashore between Hankow and Ichang; none of the passengers might except at Shasze, where there were a missionary and his wife stationed, and Mrs. Betterton proposed that some of the party should go and take a word of cheer to them. She herself remained with the children. But Lilian and Miss Frost, under the protection of Dr. Maxwell and the captain, got into a boat and rowed up the shore.

'We must land exactly opposite to the house,' said the captain, 'for Shasze is not a particularly polite place, and as it is I don't quite know how I shall get you ladies ashore. Oh, there's Mr. Pyne on his look-out on the top of the roof—*shy-ty* they call it. He mostly is there when the steamers come in. That's a good thing. He will come down and help us.'

But besides Mr. Pyne could now be seen a little fast-growing crowd of men and boys running along the shore, keeping up with the boat, and shouting violently at them. Lilian with difficulty had made out the little platform on the roof, which the captain called a *shy-ty*, and which the Chinese use for drying clothes. It resembled the loggia often seen on the poorer class of Italian houses, and on it had stood a man

in Chinese dress, pigtail and all. He could now be seen hurrying down a particularly dirty bit of the river bank. It was steep and slippery, and strewn with all manner of filth and garbage. Without pausing for explanation, he held out his hand to help them ashore. The little crowd of shouting men and boys was drawing nearer. Lilian sprang out.

'I am afraid it is too steep for you,' said the stranger. 'Grip firm hold of my hand. We must make haste, or they will be throwing things.'

He dragged Lilian up the river bank; the captain and Miss Frost scrambled up together. But though they ran for it, the mud was already flying before they had got across the street at the top of the bank, and shut to the house door behind them, the captain being ignominiously hit on the nose.

'I am very sorry,' said Mr. Pyne, as he still hurried them along the passage, and shut and barred another door, before he dared pause and say, 'It is very kind of you to come to see us. I heard you were coming up, and I thought perhaps some of you might. Mrs. Pyne is not very well to-day; but she will be very glad to see you. She has not seen a European woman for six months. Excuse our having no staircase. It is a Chinese house, you see. Can you manage a ladder?'

Miss Frost found it difficult, not so much the ladder as the stooping required at the landing, where one ladder superseded the other.

'You see I am used to it,' said Mr. Pyne apologetically. 'I hope you didn't hurt your head.'

Then they all entered the Pynes' one living room, and there stood Mrs. Pyne, looking as unlike a Chinese woman as it was possible to look, for all her Chinese clothes. For one thing, she was very fair; for another, she smiled an English smile; and then one missed the short Chinese figure and broad Chinese head. Mrs. Pyne had the sweet, placid, colourless face that seems particularly associated with a white Quaker cap. She came, indeed, of Quaker origin. Her surroundings now were so unwhite as to be pitiable. The walls and ceiling had once been painted black, and the dirt of years had stained the floor to a corresponding darkness. Mrs. Pyne's face was one that required spotless surroundings to set it off, and she was evidently in the condition that is often described as interesting, as she stood there in her disfiguring Chinese dress, made far longer than any Chinese woman wears it, looking neither one thing nor the other, and evidently not the least knowing what

to do or say. She offered them seats, and then, on being spoken to about them, exhibited with some pride their two *shai tai*.

'It is such a comfort to have somewhere to take the air without going out,' she said.

One of the *shai tai* opened off the part of the room that they screened off as a bedroom. She seemed to think this was more convenient than using another room, as they kept no servant. Then she offered them tea. Evidently she was very, very shy of Lilian and the captain, but looked with some degree of comfort at Miss Frost. So Lilian left the two together, and as Mr. Pyne was talking to Dr. Maxwell and to the captain about the steamer and its last run, and mutual friends at Hankow and Ichang, she sat staring at the room, learning its squalid want of comfort by heart, and wondering what poor person's house at Northampton would not favourably contrast with it. 'And there,' thought she, 'they have clean, peaceful streets to go out into, with foot pavements, and gas, and shop windows, and friendly faces.' Suddenly a great wave of home sickness came over the girl, as she thought of Miss Gardiner's bright, rosy face, and cheery manner, and the pleasant tea-table, and the dear old monsters by the fireplace, and Sarah, the elderly parlour-maid, who had been with Miss Gardiner as long as she could remember, and Mrs. Dace, the cook. And she thought how Mrs. Dace, and Polly, her niece, with the mottled arms, who used to come in and help her sometimes, would stare aghast to see her paying a call in such a room. And a longing for the old life that never could come back swept over her imperiously.

'I will go home,' she thought, 'by the next steamer.' Dr. Berner's kind words came back to her, and she wondered if he would be surprised to see them so soon put in requisition. 'But it doesn't matter,' she thought. 'Nothing matters but to get away from these people, who don't want us, and this filth and squalor.' Then she brushed away the tears with which her eyes had been slowly filling, and as she did so they rested upon the photograph of an elderly man in rather a showy uniform.

'That is my father,' said Mr. Pyne, turning and seeing her looking at it. 'He was a Colonel in the — Hussars!'

And Lilian Grey, generally such a thoroughbred little lady, had not a word to say—it was so additionally distressing, if indeed it were possible to be more distressed, to find this

was the China home of people in a good position. She had hoped they might always have been quite lowly people, though even then she knew none in England, however lowly, if respectable, could be required to put up with such a home. And for a moment the smell of the filth and garbage outside came back to her and overpowered her.

Miss Frost, however, was better equal to the occasion. She looked at the photograph with interest. 'What a fine-looking old man!' she said. 'And was that your home?' glancing at another photograph.

'No, my home,' said Mrs. Pyne, smiling always the same sweet, nervous smile. It was a peaceful old-fashioned-looking house in the English country, with great trees round it. 'I almost hear the rooks caw when I look at it,' said Mrs. Pyne, with a tearful look about the eyes and lips.

Then the captain fidgeted, and said he was sorry to break up the party, but he thought——and he had brought a piece of beef for them from Hankow, and a packet of this season's tea, in case they happened to be getting short. Mrs. Pyne looked at her husband, and he looked at her, before they both thanked the captain. Then they all stood up to say good-bye, and her eyes filled with tears, as she gazed into their faces, as if trying to learn them by heart, so as to keep her company for the next possible six months without a European woman.

'That's the way to the front of the house,' said Mr. Pyne, when they had all got to the bottom of the two ladders, before they turned down the dark passage again. 'It is much the best part of the house. The gateway outside is rather fine.' But Lilian distinctly saw him tremble as, without thinking, she took a step forward towards it. 'No, I daren't let you look out. The people there are really very abusive. You can hear them now. They think you must be coming. Oh, yes, I do. They are all ready. Come the other way, and if you don't mind, be as quick as you can, or it may be awkward for me to get back again. I'll run down and bring up the meat, captain, you have been so kind as to bring us. It will be a great treat. We can't get any beef here, of course, and Chinese food is a little tiring after a time.' So-then, asking them first if they were all ready, he opened the back door, and they all hurried down to the boat together. Then, with barely a leave-taking, Mr. Pyne, with his piece of beef and packet of tea, sped up the bank again, and banged to the door, before the loafers standing round had quite made out



what was happening. But there was a hail of abusive language, and not a few lumps of mud falling impotently short, as their boat sped down stream, and through it all they saw Mr. and Mrs. Pyne in their look-out waving handkerchiefs, and straining their eyes after them. Then occurred the most alarming scene to the two ladies, when all the Chinese round screamed, and they became tangled, as it were, in a crowd of boats, and every boat hooked on to theirs, and they hooked on to first one and then another ; whilst the swift rushing current carried them on and on, till at last they hooked on to the steamer herself, straining every muscle to keep hold of her, and nearly sucked underneath her, as the ladies in much terror, and with not a little difficulty, were half pulled, half pushed up the side, and arrived on deck thinking they had done the most dangerous thing that ever had been done, for the river runs fast at Shasze.

‘I wish—I do wish you had accepted their offer of tea,’ cried the captain, ‘for I’ll be bound they had not a tea-leaf in the house. I saw it in their faces, when I said I had brought them a packet. “An answer to prayer!” said Mrs. Pyne to Mr. Pyne, and “An answer to prayer!” said Mr. Pyne to Mrs. Pyne. Oh, there’s a nice Mr. Hudson Taylor for you! He travels about the world, or lives in Shanghai in luxury, and that’s the way he treats ladies and gentlemen, puts them into hovels like that, and leaves them to starve! Did you notice the cracks in the ceiling? Oh, yes, I did. Wait till there are a few really hot days, and that place will be no more habitable for Europeans than an oven. And in the rainy season don’t you think the rain will come through? And what good are they doing, being insulted and stoned every time they go outside, till they are afraid to open their own front door? And taking the air upon their *shy-ty*, as they call it! What good are they doing, that’s what I want to know.’

‘I don’t know,’ said Miss Frost with dignity, ‘but I know it must require great self-denial to live in a place like that. And I could not do it myself. And you and all those other people, who are always scoffing at the luxury of the missionaries, and the easy lives you say we lead, you ought to bow down and worship before the members of the China Inland Mission, who do all that you say we ought to do.’

But the captain refused to bow down and worship. ‘There is no pleasing some people,’ he said, ‘and it seems

I am one of those. But I don't believe in missionaries, and don't you become one of them, Miss Grey.'

'The room had a bare floor with big cracks in it, so that you really could *see* into the room beneath,' said Miss Frost, describing it to Mrs. Betterton. 'It smelt distinctly. There was no outlook of any sort except from the upper *shai tai*. What windows there were were in the roof.'

'It is my belief,' said Dr. Maxwell, 'that no European could spend a summer in that house without dying of it. I may be wrong, but I hardly see the use in these poor people attempting the experiment.'

'Of course they will live downstairs in summer,' said Mrs. Betterton. 'Everyone does. But it is an immense thing to have an upper story for the protection it affords. I know nothing of Mr. and Mrs. Pyne as workers, or indeed in any way. And, as you know, I don't hold with the China Inland keeping their missionaries so short of funds. Only, instead of denouncing them, let us make up a purse, and send it to these good people. Lilian, my dear, how much will you put in?'

'Here's a dollar,' said the chief engineer, laughing. 'Lucky I happen to have one. Yes, I give it willingly, Mrs. Betterton. My mother always had a missionary box on the table in the old farm at home.' Then the captain insisted on giving his dollar too, although Mrs. Betterton said the beef and tea had been his contribution. Little Mark brought his sugar-plums. 'Grown people *do* like sugar-plums *very* much sometimes,' he pleaded. Susanna gave a picture she had just succeeded in colouring, greatly to her own satisfaction. At the last moment they collected all the newspapers lying about, a few pamphlets, one or two articles of clothing, and handed over the whole collection to the steamer agent as he was starting for the shore.

Mr. and Mrs. Pyne again said it was an answer to prayer, and they thanked God as much as the givers.

Dr. Maxwell continued to shake his head over the house. 'Either there are or there are not some sanitary truths,' he said. 'If there are, is any man justified in expecting a special miracle to be worked on his behalf?'

'You must ask Mr. Hudson Taylor,' said Mrs. Betterton. 'I feel sure Mr. Pyne got the best house he could in the place.'

'*With* the money,' said the captain.

'I hope you realise we are all going to live in Chinese houses in Chungking,' said Mrs. Betterton. 'It is the most crowded city I ever was in ; no open spaces, all full up with houses inside the walls, and according to the Consular Reports with the worst smells of any town in China.'

Dr. Maxwell looked grave.

## CHAPTER X

### LIFE IN AN OUTPORT

Ye who in Shanghai lead a life of action,  
 Rounds of amusement interspersed with business,  
 Europe in Asia ! little do ye reckon of  
     Life in an outport !  
 Telegrams, mailboats day by day arriving,  
 Ply you with endless food for mind and body !  
 Here a rare steamer brings us news and fresh meat  
     Once in a fortnight !  
 Town by the sea plain ! all thy charms recalling  
 Here midst our mountains, redolent of springtime,  
 Much though I love thee, yet do I rejoice in  
     Life in an outport !

ARCHIBALD LITTLE, *Procul Negotiis*.

SUDDENLY, when they got up next morning, they found the air grown softer and yet fresher. There was a balmy fragrance in it. There were hills, there were farmhouses—picturesque, homelike. Soon they heard the shouts and songs of the boatmen, mellowed by distance, so as to sound like music across the water, and Lilian was for the first time reminded of Italy, as she looked out of the cabin door, and felt the sunny southern feeling. 'We are in the East, the gorgeous East, at last !' she cried. 'So far it has been only a mud-bank.' They were arriving at Ichang, they were told, and they looked out and saw the hills with purple shadows, the deep reflections on the tranquil lake-like river ; the monastery perched nest-like on the top of a mountain almost overhanging the river, the natural bridges, the pyramidal hills, the special Pyramid Hill, that is supposed to exercise a baleful influence on the fortunes of Ichang, and lastly Ichang itself, with its crenelated wall all round it ; the squatters' houses clinging on outside, till the rising river should force them to take up their houses and retire, as is the fashion of Chinese squatters ; the squalid suburb stretching along the river bank, where the

Europeans live, one or two European roofs mixed among the Chinese shanties.

'Is there *no* concession, then?' asked Miss Pearce, her two or three months in China having taught her to demand a concession, as one of the first necessities for health, as it must be if, as Dr. Maxwell said, there are any sanitary truths. But what does the British Foreign Office in its fine palace at Whitehall know of the fashion after which Chinese live and multiply, and perish by thousands every summer of some epidemic or other? What does it know or care as it sends its consuls, and expects its merchants to follow?

'No,' said the captain. 'Why, there's not a European house except a bungalow or two, and the Roman Catholics. That's the Consulate! Wait till you get inside. You'll be astonished then! They say it is a Chinese house built onto by successive consuls in their moments of madness. That's what I've heard, at least. The Commissioner lives in a temple, that one with the curving roofs and the tall tree. Halloo, there! Go astern! Stop her! Easy!' Then the bell! and almost as it sounded the white yellow Customs boat alongside with its dragon flag, and the Customs officials up the gangway. No one is kept waiting by the foreign customs at Ichang. The arrival of the steamer is their one event, and the captain, who is only the captain of a small steamboat at Hankow, becomes a great man before he reaches Ichang, stuffed with gossip himself, and bringing up all the news and fresh meat the Ichang people ever get. Then happy the examiner, who lives on board the steamer during its stay, chatting all the while with the captain and officers, besides enjoying fresh rations gratis!

'What are we to do, Mrs. Betterton?' asked Miss Pearce, as the Chinese passengers fought their way into boats in a confused medley of luggage, cargo, and desperate shouting. They all longed to go ashore, after these few days of being cooped up. But where? What to do? It is in this China is so unlike Europe for purposes of travel. At her towns intelligent curiosity is almost compelled to a full stop. For her towns do not invite investigation. Where are her hotels and smiling cafés or tea-houses? Where are her cathedrals, and museums, and picture galleries? Where, above all, are her parks, or plazas, or esplanades? Even when the riff-raff in the streets stops short of insult and mud-throwing, what boots it to face the sights and smells in those narrow streets

where 'at every step every sense is alike offended,' as said once wearily a thirty-years-in-China man.

But once confided to the Foreign Customs, Miss Grey was cared for as far as that far-reaching institution extended. And presently came back the white and yellow boat with its substantial awning and dragon flag, and Mr. Ashurst, the Commissioner, appeared on deck, all in white, with a very white and pink face at the top, and a request that the ladies would get into his boat, and come on shore to tiffin.

'You must not think of returning to the steamer in the heat of the day,' he said. 'But pray make what use you can of my temple as very literally a *pied à terre* whilst you remain here. I am only sorry I have absolutely no spare room to put at your disposal.'

Just then Dr. Maxwell returned with a missionary friend, who said he had got three boats all ready, which would presently come alongside and receive all their things on board, so that they could proceed up river at once if they liked, but his wife hoped they would first come to tea and tennis.

Miss Frost looked shocked. 'I should prefer to go and see the mission works,' she said.

'Come along, then,' cried Dr. Maxwell. 'I left the Doctor and Mr. Jenkins just preparing to go into the city, and if we go quickly we shall catch them. But it is very hot, remember. You can't walk.'

'Oh, I can walk,' said Miss Frost.

'Well, they couldn't, they said. They were waiting for chairs when I left them.'

Then the Commissioner very politely begged that the lady would make use of his chair. And presently the whole party were going on shore, Mrs. Jenkins taking the children to play with the children of the missionaries, who cannot be described here, because while Consuls and Commissioners come and go, always the same well-known missionaries remain on in Ichang, offering a cordial hospitality to all comers. But they all in the first instance found themselves confronted by some twelve single planks, all twelve of which they had to walk along single file to get on to the sandy river bed. Most difficult the ladies found it to get along them. And it seemed Mr. Ashurst did likewise. He had evidently made an unusual effort to come off and fetch them ashore. They went up the clean Customs steps, actually furnished with a hand-rail, quite in the European fashion, across a narrow street. And there

they were within the precincts of the Customs temple! Across the picturesque courtyards, with their beautiful gateway, Mr. Ashurst led them into a very large room with a large round wooden pillar somewhere not exactly in the middle of it. Behind the pillar was a table spread for luncheon, and it seemed this was all he owned as dining and reception room. But it had large European windows at either end, and he quickly led them out into a farther courtyard to see his pets, a wild cat he had in a cage, a porcupine walking about with all its quills up, and a pretty little deer. Meanwhile the other guests arrived—Dr. Liddell and Mr. Bertolacci, the two members of the Customs staff, together with Mr. Mortimer, the Consul.

Mr. Mortimer greeted them with a sort of off-hand friendliness, at once asking them to dine at the Consulate in the evening. He reminded Lilian of Mr. Stuckey by his eyes, which also wore a troubled expression. And he seemed every now and then to fall into a brown study, from which he had a difficulty in rousing himself. Mr. Ashurst, on the other hand, seemed always almost painfully aware of what was going on around him, and that something was expected of him as host, which he yet felt unable to supply, so that he looked appealingly to the others to help him. They all were evidently very friendly together, and perfectly at home at the Commissioner's, and amongst his glass and crockery, knowing its deficiencies as well as if it were their own, as the ladies presently observed. In truth it consisted of contributions levied from every man's stock, and brought round by their respective boys. That was the way they always used to manage in the outports in the old days. Now the ladies, we are told, have spoilt all that.

'I did not think you would care to meet the Roman Catholic Bishop, perhaps,' said Mr. Mortimer, 'so I have not invited him for dinner. The captain says he is too busy; and the missionaries with one consent began to make excuse. It was too hot, or the children weren't well, or somethin' or other. It is always the same thing. I suppose we aren't good enough for them: don't go to prayer meeting, and all that sort of thing. I am sure it is very good of you, that you will come. But all I meant to say is, I've asked the whole community, and here's all there'll be—all there ever is. Enough for whist, only Bertolacci can't play, and Ashurst revokes.'

'Bertolacci is learning, though,' said Dr. Liddell, laughing. He hardly ever spoke without laughing, though they none of them said anything that seemed especially calculated to arouse laughter. 'And as for revoking, I don't know how you are to talk about that after your behaviour the other night.'

'Oh, well, I must have been asleep, I suppose.'

'I should think you were,' and he laughed again.

'What will you take to drink?' asked Mr. Ashurst anxiously of Mrs. Betterton. 'Claret, champagne, ginger beer, hock? We have not got much to eat at Ichang, but we can at least give you something to drink. I can even offer you really cold water from my dry well.'

'I should like that better than anything,' said Mrs. Betterton, whilst Lilian blushing owned to preferring champagne.

'Oh, come, then, you are not all teetotallers, that's good,' said Mr. Mortimer.

'We can all drink our glass of wine without feeling we are doing something disgraceful,' said Mr. Ashurst mildly. 'Some missionaries are really so strait-laced, I didn't know if you might not be offended at my even offering you wine. And yet one does not like quite not to do it, for fear, in case——' He paused, hopelessly confused.

'It was very kind of you,' Mrs. Betterton hastened to say.

'Well, and how do you like China, Miss Grey?' asked Mr. Mortimer, at last venturing to address her. 'I dare say a great many people have asked you the same question. But you must forgive a man who has been six years in Ichang if he is unable to think of anything original to say.'

'Have you been *six* years in Ichang? Without ever going out of it?'

'Without ever going out of it! No, I go away from Saturday to Monday generally. We all do if we can. Ashurst even does not spend his Sundays in this temple. Too heathenish altogether! But it is six years since I have been through the Tiger's Teeth Gorge, that you came through this morning. Yes, it is a small one. I am not surprised you did not notice it. But I've got to believe that it wouldn't let me through—that I'm shut in for life upon this side.' He looked down as he talked, and seemed almost more to be talking to himself than to her.

'And do many people come up?' asked Lilian timidly.

She was thinking all the time—Six years ! Six years cut off from all the rest of the world !

‘Many people come up ? No ; as a usual thing nobody comes up.’

‘And what do you do ?’ continued Lilian, looking at him still more sympathetically.

‘Oh, I—I’ve got nothing to do. These Customs fellows have regular work. I’m the Consul, you know ; I’m paid to be here, that’s all.’

The tiffin was prettily arranged, and really rather good, but it *was* dull, it decidedly was dull. The men were evidently doing their best, all looking upon themselves as hosts welcoming the ladies at Ichang, but they appeared jaded, and mostly talked to one another, as if for the benefit of the ladies, and not knowing quite what to say to them. Mrs. Betterton regretted she had not brought the children by way of an enlivenment, whilst Lilian felt more and more disappointed with herself that she could not cheer these men, who all the time seemed so kind, and so amiably ready to be cheered, if only it were possible.

After luncheon Mr. Ashurst very politely invited them to adjourn to his arm-chairs, and then after that he intimated he must return to his office, but there would be tea by-and-by, and he would be glad to rejoin them for that, if they would allow him. Meanwhile there were the new papers, just arrived, but he supposed they had seen them. ‘And I don’t know what more I can do ?’ he said appealingly to the other men.

‘Why, there’s a walk,’ said Mr. Mortimer, rousing himself with a start. ‘Perhaps you’d like to go for a walk, Miss Grey. You can have my chair. And I’ve another if Mrs. Betterton would like one. And there’s Ashurst here got any amount of swell chairs. And the Doctor has got his. Let’s send for the children, and all go for a walk together.’

‘Or would Miss Grey perhaps rather play tennis ?’ asked Mr. Ashurst, deferentially. ‘We are not great at tennis in Ichang ; but there is a ground ; the outdoor staff play on it generally. But Liddell *can* play, and Mortimer. I can’t, I’m sorry to say. It seems to be since my time. But it would be quite a novelty to have a lady playing tennis in Ichang. You would be the very first.’

‘But there’s no knowing what we might come to, when the new steamer, there’s all the racket about, starts for



Chungking,' interposed Mr. Mortimer. 'Oh, it is a grand place, Ichang, a go-ahead place!'

'I think I should like best to go for a walk in chairs,' said Lilian, smiling.

'Then let us all go,' said Mr. Ashurst suavely. 'You will send for the children, will you not, Mrs. Betterton? My boy will send any note you give him, and here are writing materials. I fear I must beg to be excused now, but I will be back by four.'

In the end Mrs. Betterton walked, while the children were delighted to be put into one chair, and Lilian started in the other.

'I thought Miss Grey would like to be carried through the rice fields,' explained Mr. Mortimer. 'You see, wind about how you will, you must get through them, and there are but three ways.'

'They can't be wholesome,' said Mrs. Betterton, for the sake of something to say.

'I don't suppose they are,' said Mr. Mortimer in his offhand manner. 'And I don't suppose the groves are wholesome either, especially when they smell! Faugh! But one has to walk through them both to get out on the hills behind, and that's the only place we have to walk now the river bed is covered. In winter we have the river sands to walk on, but just in the hot weather, when one would be glad of an easy level place to saunter along, the water comes up and covers them. It is always so in life, is it not? Just when one wants a thing!'

'You take a very melancholy view of life,' cried Lilian from her chair. 'But do you take this same walk all together every day, then?'

'No, indeed! At the stroke of five minutes after four, the Chinese see three mad Englishmen in short coats and tight trousers rushing out from Ichang in three different directions, like arrows from a bow, or mad bulls, or whatever you like to compare us to. There are three ways across the paddy fields. Ashurst takes one, the Doctor another, and I take the third. I have the start of them generally rather. We each swear our way is the best, and we time ourselves carefully, so that we don't meet at the top. As for Bertolacci here, he doesn't walk, he goes to tea with Mrs. Kennedy, as you'll see he'll give us the slip and do to-day.'

'Yes, I am going to tea with Mrs. Kennedy to-day,' said

the young Italian, blushing. 'But I walk too, only I walk so much faster than you do.'

'No, you don't. You only go half the distance.'

'And do you always come this way across the paddy fields?' asked Mrs. Betterton.

'No, this is not my way. But we thought you would find this the pleasantest.'

'Then why do you always go another?' asked Lilian.

'Come, come! you mustn't cross-question a man who has been at Ichang six years. I did try to vary my walks at first. But unless I paid close attention I found I never could remember which walk I had taken yesterday, and which the day before. That worried me for a bit. So in the end I thought it best just to walk the way my feet took me. It seems it's generally the same way, but not always—not——' he was falling off into a brown study again, but suddenly roused himself. 'There! now here we are on the hills. I thought perhaps you'd like to walk now, Miss Grey. Let me help you out. There! that's the Confucian temple with the yellow roof, and that's the Hall of Literature with those curved pavilions. I believe there's mission work going on by the north gate. No, that's the south gate you are looking at, looking on to the river. North, south, east, and west, in every Chinese city. And there! that's the Dome opposite, that mountain with the dome top. A grand view from there, if you'd time to go and see it. It is one of our landmarks. And there's another, the monastery you passed this morning. And there's the Tiger's Teeth Gorge, that won't let me out; and there's the entrance to the gorges proper, right the other end of the view, looking "like the entrance to the Promised Land," as some romantic person said. That's where we spend our Saturday to Mondays. And there's Ichang! Now you have seen everything there is to see, and if you stayed here a hundred years Ichang has got nothing more to show you. Oh, yes, there's the celebrated general's grave with the stone ponies. You'd like to see the stone ponies, wouldn't you, young uns? But first, Doctor, spin us the yarn about this temple and the pyramid opposite. You're good at spinning yarns, you know. And the ladies would like to hear it.'

'Yes, we dearly love a story, don't we, Susanna?' said Mrs. Betterton. 'Let us sit down and properly enjoy it.' So they sat down on the hill-top, gazing at the lovely view, where to the west the river tempts one on as if indeed to a Promised

Land beneath its pretty palm trees and graceful cypresses, whilst to the east it seems to change into a dreamy lake, so peaceful and spread out, only shut in by the Ichang Pagoda, and the Tiger's Teeth Gorge marking it off. Between it and them stretched the graves and paddy fields; but Chinese graves have nothing sad or solemn about them, they look like rounded hillocks, or big molehills, except where here and there one more ornate has a tablet or a decorative wall and altar. Only at times the thought of the dead men watching round is apt to overpower the lonely European, for round each Chinese city the space occupied by the dead is larger than that occupied by the living, with not a tree, not a flower planted over all its hillocky acres, till one wonders what the end of China must be when the dead have occupied it all.

Thus urged, the Doctor began from the very beginning: 'The mountain opposite, you will observe, is in size and shape almost an exact natural reproduction of the Pyramid of Cheops, and struck by its peculiarity, I suppose, the Ichang people, or rather the great teachers of the philosophy of *Feng Shui*—the one real religion of China—decided that it must be this mountain that exercised a baleful influence over the fortunes of the place, so that it never got any richer, and even more important in the eyes of Chinese, so that its sons never obtained degrees at the provincial examinations. I believe for two hundred years no Ichang man had ever succeeded in obtaining a degree,' continued the Doctor. 'The professors of Germany declared that until the influence of the pyramid was counteracted, Ichang would continue barren of honours, and its riches flow into the pockets of strangers, because if you consider the curves of the river you will see that it flows *past* Ichang without anything tending to arrest its course at the city. It distinctly does not flow towards it, which is the propitious position. Also, if you notice the formation of the hills opposite you will understand that they all represent strangers—as distant hills always do. This pyramid opposite is evidently one of them intruding amongst the gentler Ichang hills, and poking its head up amongst them, thus evidently signifying a stranger appropriating what ought to be their wealth. At least, if you do not see all this, believe me, it is because you are not properly grounded in the lore of *Feng Shui*, which literally translated means Wind and Water, or climate, and may be taken to stand for the Science of Aspects, sadly overlooked in England.' Lilian said she

quite saw what he meant. Dr. Maxwell was doubtful, while Mrs. Betterton, who had naturally heard a good deal about Feng Shui before, looked non-committed. 'Now latterly, since the opening of the place to foreign trade, which took place ten years ago, a little more money has been set circulating in this poverty-stricken mountain city, and the poor people actually subscribed ten thousand dollars to build what looks from below like a doll's house perched on a bare conical pedestal, but which you see now is a spacious Buddhist temple—with this wide three-storied pavilion added on, curiously enough with European windows—to tally with and oppose the menacing pyramid across the water. The place has not grown rich yet, and there are grumblers who say another story is wanted, and the pavilion has not been built high enough. Besides there is a good deal of difference of opinion as to the site chosen. Some people say it ought to have been on that hill. And wherever you hear Ichang men in animated conversation you will not be far wrong in assuming that if not discussing some actual question of cash, they are busy with this vexed question of the site. But I am happy to add that a graduate actually did return here from the last triennial examination at Wuchang, and was welcomed home with fire crackers and triumphal arches by his delighted fellow-citizens. This is all the story I can tell you, but I feel sure it will convince you that there is something in Feng Shui after all.'

The children clapped their hands as the Doctor concluded, for he laughed so heartily himself at his grand narration, they felt sure the story was amusing, and laughed the more because they themselves could not find it so.

'But are we not going to see the temple?' asked Lilian.

'“Hills from below, and temples from the outside,” is the rule, Miss Grey,' said Mr. Ashurst.

But they all went inside to please her, climbed the Chinese ladders, and looked out through the European windows, seeing almost into the beautiful Ichang gorge from this increased height. Then they wandered along the breezy hill-tops, till they came to the hill called—in memory of the one European who once was happy enough to shoot a hare there—Hare Hill, and then descended upon the grave of the celebrated general, a stone arch, a stone altar, and between the two in pairs stone lions, stone monsters, stone horses, stone men, all life size, and standing out on the lonely hillside together. Lilian almost cried over the pathetic oddity of the scene.

'And we know nothing about him! And they thought him so great—gave him such a grand grave!'

'After all he was only a Chinaman, and wore a pigtail. You cannot get up any romance about a Chinaman,' said Mr. Mortimer, as if stating a plain matter of fact, that nobody could dispute.

'I am sorry I cannot translate the inscription for you at sight,' said Mr Ashurst. 'But I will send my teacher here to copy it, and make a translation, which I shall have much pleasure in forwarding to you, and then you will know all there is to know. About the pigtail—oh, ah! Yes, there is the date, you see. It was in the Ming Dynasty, so he cannot have worn one. You have heard of the Ming tombs, of course, Miss Grey. Those and the earlier tombs of the emperors at Nankin were all on this model. These stone figures were probably in the first instance substitutes for the sacrifices that had been previously offered. You know now they burn paper figures at funerals. You must have seen the paper horses, and sedan chairs, and wives being carried along to be burnt. The Chinese are a very humane people, any blood-shedding is abhorrent to them as Buddhists. So different from those dreadful Jews,' and he turned with some severity to Mrs. Betterton, as if holding her responsible for Jewish sacrifices. This seemed to promise a rather serious controversy, so Lilian and Mr. Mortimer instinctively turned to one another.

'When you first came to Ichang, I must have been at Constantinople with my father and his second wife,' said Lilian. 'I came home by the Italian Lakes, and went to school in Brussels. Since then I seem to have lived all my life, and come out to China, and everything. And you have been here all those years!'

'All those years! It would be a large slice out of your life, would it not? I don't know what the rest of the world is doing. The girls are all playing football in England now, aren't they? and beating the men at the examinations! But you are hardly the regulation size, are you? I thought all the girls were rising six feet now—in "Punch."'

'Ah, but I am not in "Punch." And I really have grown a good deal during those years, though you do think so little of my size.'

'Well, well! I dare say you have. I dare say everyone else has been doing something while I've been—*out* in China!

Out in China ! How ridiculous it sounds ! When one thinks what one used to understand by it—out in the world ! At large ! Out of the world it is really.'

Then presently to Mrs. Betterton apologetically, 'I can't take my eyes off Miss Grey. What ! a good many men been in the same case ? Oh, then she's reckoned pretty, is she ? Well, then, I'm all right. It's so long since I've seen a girl, I was afraid I was making a fool of myself. What ! make a success in London, you think ? Be noticed in the Park ? Why, that's just what I was thinking, that she's about the prettiest girl I ever set eyes on. Well, then, I'm not mad after all—not yet. And Ichang has got a pretty girl at last ! Oh, it is a grand place, is Ichang ! Everything comes to it, if you only wait long enough.'

'You must be very anxious to get your leave, or be moved at least ?' said Mrs. Betterton sympathetically.

'No, no, I'm not. That's the worst of it. I funk it. That's what I don't like. I'm glad I don't live in a temple, though. I always think I should wake in the morning, and look up at those old idols, and say, "How do you like it, old fellows, being poked away for a barbarian, who tubs regularly every day under your very noses ?"'

Then they found themselves at the Kennedys' door, and went in across the pleasant lawn, into the pretty little house. Everything in it was English, and so fresh and clean that sitting there they fancied themselves in England once more, and quite forgot all the thousands of miles that lay between. But when they passed out by the garden gate again, by a sudden and painful transition they found themselves in China, in a Chinese street in the suburb of a Chinese second-rate town. Ten pages of description, such as only M. Zola could write, would hardly render realisable to those who have never been in China all the various nastinesses with which they found themselves confronted during the five minutes it took them to go round to the Consulate for dinner. And those who have been in China, and have walked through a Chinese street—the two are not synonymous ; there are English people born and bred in China who have never done so—know and can never forget. For they are all much alike all over the vast empire. An English street looks so empty afterwards, all swept and garnished, nothing left lying about, not even a pig or a baby.

## CHAPTER XI

## THE FIRST RUMOUR OF A RIOT

'China, sir, is a very unknown place to us—in one sense of the word unknown—but who is not intimate with it as the land of tea and china, and kotows, and pagodas, and mandarins, and Confucius?'—LEIYOU HUNT.

WHEN they entered the old Ichang Consulate by a decidedly crooked and very dusty passage way, they found Mr. Mortimer looking very grave.

'Anyone heard anything about this rumour?' he asked—over his shoulder, as it were.

No one spoke, no one moved. He waited. To Lilian there was at once something appalling about the dead silence that prevailed. It prepared her for what was to come.

'It can't have come by telegraph, because the telegraph wires are broken.'

'They always are,' said the Doctor. 'They've always sense enough for that.'

'And it can't have come any other way, because it is impossible. But the Chinese say there was trouble at Chinkiang two days ago—that all the foreign houses are burnt, and the foreigners driven out.'

'Chinkiang!' exclaimed Mr. Bertolacci.

'Chinkiang!' cried the Doctor in a different key, and quite half a minute behind.

'Chinkiang!' said Mr. Ashurst in a very low tone, and as if to himself, after about a minute's pause.

'That's the first place we stopped at as we came up the Yangtsze,' explained Mrs. Betterton to Lilian, 'where the captain complained so much of the size of the missionaries' houses, and we learnt afterwards they were schools for native teachers. You remember the Consulate, with its large garden and beautiful view?'

'You hear all the houses are burnt?' asked the Doctor.

'That's what my writer has just told me.'

'Do you think it will be safe to go on to Chungking?'

asked Mrs. Betterton after a pause.

'Well, it is right the other way, is it not? There's been one riot there, too.'

'And you mean there may be another?'

'No, I mean they don't generally have two in the same

place, one on top of the other. Ichang is the next place. There's never been a riot here yet, and each port is bound to have its turn. But I'm determined to be even with them, the beggars. I have made a complete inventory of all my things, with the prices I value them at, and I've sent it down to Shanghai. If they burn me too, they'll have to pay all the same to my heirs and executors. Heirs and executors! How grand it sounds! I've made a will, too, on the strength of it.'

'Not really?' asked Lilian.

'Haven't I, though? My will and inventory went down to Shanghai by the last mail. And now I'm ready for them. Let them come on, I say! I'm spoiling for a fight——'

Then they went in to dinner, and next day the boats were all stowed, the masts stood up and made fast, the bamboo tow-lines coiled ready, the trackers engaged, and the boats moved over to the other side of the river to wait for the trackers, just as in old days vessels from London used to drop down through the Pool before completing their crews. The new arrivals were delighted with the picturesqueness of their floating homes, red inside with green rafters; the screens between the cabins being of gold and green and blue in complex pattern, again upon a dull red ground. With their English furnishings and curtains, indeed, the first view of the cabins resembled nothing so much as the stage of a bijou theatre. But the space appeared small if, as they were told, they were to spend a month on the way; although it was large enough to study Chinese in, they all supposed. Lilian said she too must begin now, and study regularly like the others. But what with the three boats, and with the Kennedys all coming off to see them start, and bringing them a fresh supply of their own chickens and their own fresh laid eggs, and vegetables out of their garden, and with Mr. Mortimer and Dr. Liddell seeing them off, or *songing* them, as they called it, and Mr. Ashurst actually hailing them from the shore in a chair next morning, and sending off a bunch of flowers, a bunch of cabbages, and a basket of lettuces, they all felt as if they never should know their own places, who belonged to which boat, and which was sitting room and which kitchen. Little Mark was in the seventh heaven, and even Susanna expanded, and for once romped about like a child.

'And now good-bye to Western civilisation for ever!' said Mrs. Betterton.

'For ever! In seven or eleven years at latest I thought



we all got leave of absence. Do you not hope to return?' said Miss Pearce, evidently much startled.

'Hope to return! Is this the way for a woman, who has but one life to live, to waste the months that God has given her? No! I have taken our boys to England. And when little Mark requires to go to school, I have them to send him to, or better still, one of my other boys may come and fetch him. And for Susanna, the mission-field is the best training for a missionary or the wife of a missionary. And I hope to keep her with me.'

'Mother, when I grow big,' said Susanna, 'I want to be a Catholic priest, and preach in the church. They have such nice big houses, and I like much better to preach than to listen.'

'Susanna, you are the naughtiest child I ever did see,' said Miss Pearce.

'She takes after her mother,' said Mrs. Betterton, laughing. 'I recollect saying much the same thing when I was her age. And I have great trust in the grace of God for her eventually. But for the present I hand her over to you, Lilian. Make of her a meek and tractable child if you can. But whatever you do, prevent her from falling into the water.'

There had been no more positive news about Chinkiang before they started on up the great river, with the uncertainty whether what they had heard was true or not. It would be months now before they could hear more.

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## CHAPTER XII

### IN THE NIUKAN GORGE

We parted with hope dead, but love alive;  
Was this to meet? Not so, we have not met.

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

At Ichang they had all seemed to think the trip to Chungking such a delightful one, and those who were about to travel through their glorious gorges so enviable in comparison with themselves, that Lilian's resolution to return to England at once had evaporated before she was aware. She thought now she would at least go on to Chungking and see Mrs.

Betterton and the children settled in, and only then return by the first opportunity—she supposed there must be opportunities for returning even from Chungking. But she felt in a frightened sort of way that the world was far bigger than she had imagined, and more terrible, and far, far sadder, and as if circumstances were hurrying her along in a way she had never contemplated. She longed to have a quiet time to think it all over. But where can anyone ever find a quiet time in a Chinese kwadze, going through the Yangtsze gorges? The men sprang on shore to tow, running and yapping like a pack of hounds, the drum beat to give the orders, the plaited towline broke, and the boat went wheeling round in a whirlpool, then careered down stream, losing in a few minutes the ground so painfully traversed in the course of hours. Then they grew hot all over, looking at the unhappy teachers, finding evidently with such difficulty a dizzy foothold in the invisible cracks of some apparently inaccessible rock up above their heads, and liable at any moment to be dragged over into the swift-running current below should any man not pull fair, or his strength forsake him for a moment, so as to cast an unexpected strain upon the others; at other times bowed double, clutching on to the ground with their hands in desperate effort to move the boat an inch, or straining every nerve not to lose ground, as some freshet took hold of the boat and shook it. It was hot enough already without looking at the trackers; the sun streamed down upon their boats, till they had to close every aperture, draw down mats over the windows, hang a blanket over the front partition, always the weakest part in one of these boats. Then when the sun had been shut out there seemed to be no air to breathe, and they all looked at one another with pale faces through the darkened cabin, and wondered silently how long they could hold out. Mrs. Betterton handed round palm-leaf fans, and said the one word *kimonos*. It had been understood beforehand that every member of the party should be provided with a Japanese *kimono* before starting, as the coolest garment consistent with decency. The ladies rather tittered when Mr. Jenkins appeared in his, showing rather more scraggy throat than seemed quite necessary; but Dr. Maxwell dressed his like an ancient Roman, and looked quite stately, whilst the ladies saw that their appearance as a group was decidedly improved. The variety of striking patterns on the cottons,

of which their *kimonos* were made, also promised an endless fund of amusement.

But just then everything began to break—the tea-things broke, the glasses, all the eggs rolled together in a mash, whilst the cupboards and tables fell over. For in these boats there are no fixtures, everything is as limber as possible, even the partitions are boards but loosely put together, and all liable to come to pieces without notice. They now hammered in nails where they could, and lashed what they could, and packed away everything they could possibly do without. Then they swept away the broken fragments with hardly a regret, they all felt so dizzy and frightened with turning in the whirlpools. And this had been going on for four days and nights, when one night they moored in the middle of the beautiful Niukan Gorge, that all the globe trotters now rave about, but that is nothing like so varied as the farther-on twenty-mile-long Witches' Gorge, nor at all so overwhelming as that last grand chasm, the Bellows, or, to call it by its other more poetical name, the Gorge of the Fearsome Pool. They had never yet had a fair wind, and had entered the Niukan by towing, although Mrs. Betterton beforehand had pronounced this impracticable. But before climbing up the terrible wall of rock at its entrance in order to haul at the boats, they had noticed each tracker take one of those bits of plaited towline, that when no longer useful for towing they use as torches, and lighting it at the fire proceed up the apparently perpendicular rock—a slip from which would mean death—a lighted torch in his teeth. There were also three joss sticks burning on each boat while the trackers climbed. Then at nightfall they had moored at the turn of the Gorge, where the mountains opposite assume the form of a vast castle standing out against the sky, battlements, flanking towers, and all, whilst across the river the one tree, that is strangely enough the Feng Shui of the Province of Hunan, looks down upon Hupeh. The day had been singularly breathless, and with night coming on they had been afraid to land in what looked such inaccessible country, to try for a breath of fresh air. But the front of the boats was, as usual at night, all full of weary trackers, so they had climbed on to the roof of their cabins by Dr. Maxwell's advice, and sat there all huddled together, afraid to move for fear of falling off, and silently chafing one another, as is the way of people too long shut

up together. At last bedtime had come. But Lilian had failed to sleep, she had never been so restless before ; till at last she felt as if she could bear it no more, and in the early grey dawning she had hurriedly dressed, and stolen out on to the shore. There was a path, actually a path, and she followed it, astonished to find one in what had appeared such savage solitude the night before. Then gradually she became aware of a house, of more than one house, and realised that it was the width of the river, the height of the mountains, that dwarfed everything, and made nearer, smaller objects pass unobserved. The path led her on involuntarily ; it was such much easier walking than she would have thought possible. But she checked herself on the top of a little knoll from which she could command a grand view of the river, and that special castellated mountain opposite, and afraid of straying too far, thought she would sit down there in the cool and quiet to think, and quickly return to the boats as soon as she saw anyone moving upon them. Walking to the edge of the knoll, she found again to her surprise that she could not actually look down upon the boats. But directly one moved she thought she must see it, and then she could run down and easily get on board one of the others before all were off. Besides, she counted upon being aroused in a minute or two by the noise Clinamen habitually make over their operations. How long she sat there she never knew ; sometimes afterwards she fancied she must have fallen asleep, the quiet was so soothing. But at the time it seemed to her as if she only sat there for a moment or two, gazing up at the castle battlements opposite, fancying the sentinels pacing to and fro, the lady of the castle looking out, when suddenly she became aware by the silent plash that there was a boat moving beneath her. A boat ! she sprang to her feet, and scrambled down. It was as she had thought but the work of a few moments. But there were the boats, all three, under way with a fair breeze, and the men whistling and cat-calling for it to continue, doing so with a will too, as if they verily believed the wind would not blow unless they called. What with the echoes, and what with the men whistling and yelling, Lilian knew it was impossible for her to make herself heard. But yet she called ! she called again and again, she fluttered her white pocket-handkerchief, she waved a stick, she even took up clods of earth, and threw them after the departing boats. In vain ! Nobody

looked back ! Nobody answered her ! They were all gone, all ! As half dying she realised this, she became aware of what was to her even more terrible, that she was not alone. There out of the ground, as it were, in a fashion common to China, had risen up a little crowd all round silently standing, or squatting, looking at her. Would they not understand what had happened by her gestures ? No ! it seemed they would not. She waved her hands, she pointed to the retreating boats. But the most paralysing thing about the Chinese is that whether they have a language of gesture or a language of the eyes, that passes current among themselves—and it does not appear as if they had—that which would be understood all over Europe is either wholly unintelligible to them, or, worse still, conveys the wrong meaning. Try to smile friendly at a Chinese child, and watch its face withering under what to it seems your baleful glare ! Lilian, who had travelled as a child amongst thought-reading Italians and Greeks, had from the first felt a sense of hopelessness about all Chinese intercourse from noticing this obtuseness of theirs to look or gesture. But she tried her best, though feeling each moment more hopeless, and thus more inefficient. At last one man laughed ! Then they all laughed ! Even to nerves that are not over strong there is apt to be something particularly insulting about a Chinese laugh. Lilian recollected the stone-throwing and insults at Shasze, the report from Chinkiang, Mr. Mortimer's words about Ichang being the next place for a riot. As the people advanced upon her she became beside herself with fear, she ran up the hill again, sprang on to the knoll where she had before sat, and there brandishing her stick was prepared to throw herself over if they came too near. They did not. They squatted down on their heels in a semicircle, and stared at her, as they would at a wild beast they had trapped. 'Oh ! a boat ! a boat !' cried Lilian. 'Oh ! if I could only make them understand I want a boat. Oh ! will nobody give me a boat ? Will nobody help me ?'

She realised with lightning quickness how long it might be before the others might realise what had happened. It would seem so unlikely. Mrs. Betterton would be sure to think she had stepped on to one of the other boats, and been detained. Probably not till they all met for breakfast would they realise what had happened. And if they did not meet for breakfast—if owing to this fair wind the boats kept apart ! A dizzy

feeling came over her, there was a singing in her ears! A man was advancing towards her, a man naked to the waist, holding out his great rough hand. 'Oh, God help me! God help me!' cried Lilian with a sudden shriek. The colour had left her face, her eyes were wide open, she was almost as terrible to the honest agriculturists of the gorges as they were to her. But there, out of the ground as it were, as the others had appeared, appeared now Claude Fortescue, unkempt and haggard, and in clothes far more worn and battered looking even than those in which she had first known him, but still unmistakably Claude Fortescue! He turned paler, and took a step back, as he saw her. 'Lilian here! O God! then Lilian is dead!' he groaned rather than spoke, his eyes almost starting out of his head, and the veins in his forehead standing out knotted. He stood still staring at her, and breathing hard, like one who in very deed saw a ghost.

'No, I am not dead! I am not dead! I am alive! But, oh, help me, Mr. Fortescue! Help me!'

He still stood, quite still, staring at her with his astonished eyes and knotted brows, as if he did not believe she were alive.

'Gardie is dead, not I,' said the girl sorrowfully. 'Dear, dear Gardie!' She had considered so much, and so often, whether or not she ought to write to tell him, that on seeing him it would anyhow have seemed the first thing she had to say to him. But it was forced from her now. Claude Fortescue passed a hand across his forehead. He seemed to begin to realise that it was no ghost that was addressing him. But as he did so he seemed also to forget that he had ever thought she was dead. 'Dear, dear Gardie!' the girl had said, and stopped choked by a sob.

'Why do you grieve for that?' asked he almost sternly. 'Is it not well for her to be in heaven?'

'Ye-es—but for us?'

'For us! For us!' He repeated the words as if incapable of grasping the idea they conveyed.

'I had no home,' said the girl, 'and so I have come out to China with my cousin, my mother's only near relation—Mrs. Betterton.'

'Mrs. Betterton! Mrs. Betterton *your* cousin!' He staggered, and turned away, as if suddenly hard hit. It was impossible not to be struck by his low tone of agony.

But he had turned away, and Lilian began to fear he was

leaving her. She went on quickly, 'Yes, she is on her way to Chungking with her children. There is a large party of us.' Then in a more piteous tone, as the recollection of her position came back to her, 'And I came on shore this morning, and nobody knew. And there was a fair wind, and they have all gone and left me!'

'You are going to Chungking?' he asked. 'You—Lilian—Lilian Grey! You are going to Chungking—with Mrs. Betterton! Oh, Cassandra! Cassandra!' and as with an exceeding bitter cry he uttered these last words he looked up at the mountains as if asking them to cover him.

There is the mother instinct implanted deep in the heart of every woman. She had heard him spoken of as ill—half mad. She saw now that he was agitated beyond her comprehension, and forgetting herself now, she thought only how she could soothe him—restore him to calm. Instinctively she knew the only way was to force upon his attention her own need of active practical aid. It was she who approached him now, and laying her hand upon his arm spoke very gently, but very distinctly, 'I cannot speak any Chinese. You will help me to get a boat to go after my cousin, will you not, Mr. Fortescue? She will be terrified when she finds I am not there, and will think all sorts of dreadful things. And—and I have had no breakfast.'

He looked at her, looked down at her hand upon his arm, glanced up at a house upon the mountain side, but did not offer to take her there. At last he turned and spoke to the people in Chinese. It seemed to take a long time to arrange. Everything does in China. Some of the men went away, and one called out to another somewhere else. Lilian grew almost tired of waiting, and all the time she noticed he never looked at her again, now that he *knew* she was not a ghost. Then he had seemed to gaze his heart out. But now he never looked at her, nor had he ever held out his hand, nor greeted her in any way. There were hollows about his forehead, she noticed now, and his chest seemed sunken in; altogether he looked like a man in sore need of help. But what was he doing there? And why did he behave so strangely? At last he spoke, kicking away a pebble with his foot, but not even now looking at her as he spoke in short, abrupt sentences, with long pauses between, during which he breathed hard, as if doing something almost beyond his strength. 'They have got a boat. It will be ready directly. They have been

disputing about the price. I told them I would give them 1,000 cash anyhow, and another 1,000 if they caught up the other boats in the course of the first hour. Otherwise they might delay. They will be ready directly now. It will be better for you to go down to the boat. I am living upon Chinese food, which I am afraid you would not like, so I am sorry I cannot offer you any breakfast. But you will probably catch up your boat very quickly. It is a *kwadze*, I suppose, and they never go fast.'

At the moment Lilian was struck by his saying 'you,' not 'we,' but even that did not prepare her for his not getting into the boat with her, nor even holding out a hand to help her into it. She had thought of course he would go with her, and take care of her till he could hand her over to her friends. And there was so much she wished to say to him, and to ask. But he stood there now, with his arms folded, looking down on the ground, and only after she was seated in the boat, as it was already moving away, did she see him raise his head slowly and look after her. There seemed to be tears in his eyes, but she did not know, for there were tears in her own. But she certainly saw a quiver pass over him, as he turned quickly away again, and stood looking at the ground once more. Then in an altered tone, almost roughly, he said, 'You are perfectly safe. I know these men well. I have told them to take care of you.'

Lilian sat in the boat as if petrified, still and silent, looking back at him. She saw him once more turn quickly, almost convulsively, as if he had changed his mind, or suddenly remembered something. But then he stood quite still again, gazing after her. And the distance was already so fast widening between them, she could not see the expression of his face, only that he wore a more natural, wide-awake air than he had done before during their brief interview. The palms of his hands were turned outward, as if he were stretching out his hands to her, but he never called to the boat to stop. He had never once touched her hand, never shown any gladness at seeing her, far from it. And he had never offered to accompany her! She sat there crushed, bewildered. It was as if some one had suddenly trampled upon her.

It was like a ghost Lilian came in upon the astonished party at breakfast time, just as serious inquiries were beginning to be made about her, but before any real uneasiness had been



felt. Susanna, indeed, had been put in the corner by Miss Pearce for persisting in asserting that Miss Grey had been left behind. She now refused to come out until Miss Pearce apologised for having doubted her word.

‘I knew you were lost, Cousin Lilian. Because I reached over into the water, and I should have been quite in the river only one of the boatmen pulled me back. And you didn’t say anything. So I knew you were left behind, because mother told you to see I did not fall into the water. So I knew you would take care of me. That was why I reached.’

‘But you must not do it again, Susanna. You must take care of yourself.’ But Lilian spoke so low, even the child could hardly hear her, and was far more impressed than if she had been again punished. Lilian did not say she had been frightened, she did not explain how she had got the boat, nor say anything about Mr. Fortescue. But she looked so tired they were all afraid to ask her anything, besides feeling very guilty in regard to her.

‘In future there must be a captain to each boat, and a roll-call,’ said Mrs. Betterton. ‘Anyone found missing must be inquired for on the other boats at once. It is a pity to delay the boats, of course, but anything is better than leaving anyone behind.’

‘It was very careless of me,’ said Lilian, ‘very careless and very stupid. But I think I will go and lie down now. I am so very tired.’

She seemed to sleep all the morning, but they all noticed with sorrow she looked just as tired when she appeared again; still spoke in low, mournful tones under her breath, still looked and moved like her own wraith. Dr. Maxwell administered bromide and tonics alternately. He attributed Miss Grey’s breakdown to the heat. Mrs. Betterton did not know to what to attribute it. Miss Pearce said, ‘I really pity the poor girl. She is quite out of place among us. She feels no vocation to be a missionary, and is quite unfitted for one.’

‘Do you think so?’ said Mrs. Betterton. ‘I have sometimes hoped——’

‘Why, you could not hope it for her surely?’ said Miss Pearce. ‘It is a hard life, when all is said and done, that is if you do your work. I don’t want to praise ourselves, or anything, but there is a good deal of self-denial about it. There are so many of us at home, I had to go out in the world and do something, and then the occasion offered, and I thought I

had rather be a missionary than take to teaching. But that was all the choice lay before me. Now Miss Grey, I understand, has plenty of money, and might live at home in comfort. And then she is so young, and so alone too ! When the mail came in, and I got my budget, I felt quite ashamed to open it before her, poor child ! with perhaps a letter from her lawyer, or the old housekeeper, or one of her schoolfellows, nothing more at all. No ; depend upon it, what Miss Grey has got to do is to make some relations for herself in life, not to cut herself off further from the world by sticking herself down in some out-of-the-way place in China. And whom is she to meet up country ? Why, there is Dr. Maxwell. I am not depreciating Dr. Maxwell. Indeed, I have the greatest possible respect for him—he is a good man, and a clever man. And he adores the very ground she treads on. But you wouldn't have a girl like Miss Grey marry a man like Dr. Maxwell ?'

'But do you think he cares for her, then ? I have never noticed——'

'Oh, I don't know about caring—I'm not great on love affairs—but he thinks everything of her. We all get fresh flowers for breakfast every morning, don't we ? Well, that's thanks to having Miss Grey with us. The Doctor isn't one to care for flowers for themselves, but he just thinks as everyone must think, that Miss Grey looks natural with a posy, and he can't offer her one all by herself, of course. Then he didn't talk to her as long as there was anyone else—just watched her. Now he talks to her ! And he has found out what she likes to hear—though why, I can't think, but he just praises the Chinese to her by the hour. You'd think they were the perfect people, to hear Dr. Maxwell talk. That *rests* Miss Grey, it seems. When Miss Frost speaks of them as idolators she just turns pale and shrivels up. But I think she ought to be sent down to Shanghai as soon as possible, and just go right back again to England.'

'When I was a young girl,' said Mrs. Betterton, 'my great burning wish was to travel. I thought she might also have a girl's fancy for travelling, and I have never had any idea of Miss Grey's remaining in Chungking, unless she wished to become a missionary in the end.'

'My dear Mrs. Betterton, you look at it quite differently from the rest of us,' said Miss Pearce. 'You came out with a dear good husband, who loved you, and whom you loved. You had hardships, but you were together, both doing the work your hearts were set upon. Oh, I dare say you went

through a good deal, but missionary life to you has been just one long honeymoon, freed from the trammels of society, and the conventionalities, and all that. It is rather different for all of us, who come out alone, away from those we love—I don't want to boast,' said Miss Pearce. 'And I would rather be a missionary than a teacher. But if I'd come out with the man I loved, and he loved the work, why I suppose the whole world could not contain a woman more happy than I.' She spoke with strong feeling, and Mrs. Betterton remembered having heard that Miss Pearce had been engaged for three years to a young man who had died. 'And there's Janie Frost! the poor thing is just melting with the heat. Her Scotch lungs don't know what to make of it yet. But her heart is just full of thankfulness all the while to be allowed to carry God's blessing to a people she believes are perishing for want of it. She feels as I should about handing a cup of water to a man dying of thirst. She can't think about difficulties or hardships for the desire to serve him. But Miss Grey will never feel like that; she has doubts and qualifications. God bless her! she could never be a whole-souled missionary. And you don't think a life like Mrs. Jenkins' would suit her, do you? Dragging about doing nothing with a man who is half his time doing woman's work because she doesn't do it. And as to her marrying Dr. Maxwell, why he'd never dream of it himself. There are classes and classes after all! And he has too much good sense. He just worships her as a sort of saint, I fancy.'

But it was true that it was with Dr. Maxwell Lilian always walked and talked now. Mrs. Betterton saw that Miss Pearce's observation had been quite correct now that her own attention was called to the matter. She only wondered a little that Miss Pearce had been so quick to notice it.

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## CHAPTER XIII

### THE RESCUE PARTY

If a man who has done wrong repents and corrects himself, if he abstains from evil deeds, and accomplishes all sorts of good works, he will at length obtain joy and felicity. This is called changing evil fortune for good.—*Taoist Book of Rewards and Punishments.*

'WELL, what do you think is the news to-day?' said the Doctor, bursting into Mr. Mortimer's room whilst that gentleman was still engaged in dressing.

'Oh, Kiukiang burnt too! Wuhu! Shanghai!' said the Consul grimly. 'How do I know? What do I care?' He was evidently in a black mood.

'No, something far more wonderful than a Chinese riot. We all know we are living on a volcano,' said the Doctor in a tone of disgust at his news being supposed to be so commonplace. His cheeks were glowing, and his eyes sparkled. His whole air was calculated to exasperate beyond endurance a man who fancied himself bored to death. But he saw quickly Mr. Mortimer would not stand any playing with, and he burst out, 'Fortescue is living in the Niukan Gorge!'

'Fortescue! In the Niukan Gorge!' Mr. Mortimer hurled the boot that he was in the act of putting on to the ceiling, then caught it again. 'Who—op! Well, that beats everything. But what is the meaning of it?'

'The meaning of it? Has it any meaning? I'm sure I don't know. But my teacher says he has heard it from a man who came down to sell loquots, that there's an Englishman there, living in a cottage; and from the whole description it can be no one else but Fortescue. Besides, what other Englishman is there to hide away up there? However, the long and the short of it is, I want your boat. And if you'll come too——'

'If I'll come too! Well, I should think there can be no doubt where we shall spend our Sunday this week. But let me see! Let us take plenty of eatables. The poor wretch must be starving. We'll have *pâté de foie gras* and champagne. Oh, yes, we will! When the prodigal in the Bible was found they killed the fatted calf, you know. We don't keep fatted calves at Ichang, but what we have we'll take; and we'll have a proper tiffin this time, champagne and all, see if we don't. Do you think you'd better put up a strait-waistcoat too, by the way?'

But though they talked thus gaily—it was so delightful to have something happening at last—they were both serious enough in their preparations.

'I'm taking some bromide,' said the Doctor. 'I wouldn't be lavish with the champagne, Mortimer—not at first, at least—unless we get him safe away in the boat. Of all extraordinary freaks!'

'I've ordered a spare room to be got ready, and I'm taking an extra mattress, and plenty of lemonade—cooling, you know! Do you think I'd better enforce a little consular authority?'

He is not a consul now, and I don't believe he has got a passport. I'm sure the old general would oblige us by sending up a couple of Yamen runners and a file of soldiery if we liked to get up a scene. Then you and I might come in as a rescue party. Anyway, he has no earthly right to be settling down in the Niukan Gorge. It is clear against all the treaties.'

'The missionaries settle down wherever anyone will let them a house.'

'Oh, the missionaries be hanged! They do so at their own peril. It is not in any of the treaties, except the French, and, though there's the favoured nation clause, Sir Thomas Wade—'

'Ah, well, I suppose some woman is at the bottom of it.'

'Oh, *do* you think so?' in a tone of disgust. 'Isn't Fortescue, too? Oh, I meant nothing, only that I shouldn't have thought it of Fortescue. Well, come on! Luck to-day is Saturday, and the wind up river. Let's throw up our hats! I'm no longer acting Consul.'

With all their exertions and a splendid breeze, they only got into the Niukan Gorge late on Sunday afternoon, and then they wondered how they should ever find him. But there was no difficulty about that at all. There, standing opposite to the one tree, the Luck of Hunan, over against the castled crags, staring straight down the turn of the river where Lilian had left him, stood Claude Fortescue, his clothes frayed and soiled, and apparently having all contracted, or he outgrown them, his hair and beard looking dishevelled, his left hand supporting his right elbow, and his chin leaning on his right hand. He was frowning horribly, and staring so intently up river he never noticed their boat arriving, nor them as they jumped out of her.

'Well, how are you, old fellow?' hailed the joyous Doctor.

'That you, Fortescue?' said Mr. Mortimer in the most nonchalant tones possible.

'We expected you down a fortnight ago,' continued the Doctor, determined to keep up the conversation, and somehow managing to place himself behind Mr. Fortescue up the hill, so as to cut off any rapid retreat that way.

'You'll dine with us, of course,' said Mr. Mortimer, apparently too lazy to do more than dawdle along between the other and the river, without specially looking at him. 'Coming on to Ichang to-night? Boat broken down? Where is it?'

'I have no boat,' said Mr. Fortescue, turning away ; then, finding himself there confronted by the Doctor, turning back again, and at once falling again into staring up river, as if his eyes were fascinated. 'I am—living here—upon Chinese food. I don't touch meat now. Since the Chinese method of thought is nourished upon vegetables, and I wish to attain to——'

'You live upon vegetables, too, of course. Yes, very sensible. Well, we happen to be short of meat. Vegetarianism is sometimes a necessity in Ichang ; so that won't prevent your sharing our beans and cauliflowers,' said Mr. Mortimer, who seemed to be in a brown study himself, during which, however, he very languidly passed his arm through Mr. Fortescue's, apparently not noticing that the other showed no desire for it, nor had in any particular way greeted them. 'We'll do the best we can to entertain you. But it is a pity you weren't with us last week. Grand doings ! A whole missionary convoy of young ladies ! Ichang had never seen the like of it. And one young lady—a Miss Grey, not a missionary ! The first girl not a missionary we have ever had, unless you count Eurasians. What she is going to do up country can't imagine. Don't think she can, either. Great mistake taking a girl like that to Chungking, don't you think so ?'

'If an angel descended upon earth I should not presume to criticise the manner of her coming,' said the other slowly.

'Oh, it is that way the land lies, is it ?' said Mr. Mortimer to himself with an involuntary whistle. 'I suspected it from the first, somehow. Well, that kind is curable. If it is only that kind it is all right.'

'Homœopathic !' said he to the Doctor. 'A few more drops of the draught that poisoned !' and they exchanged glances.

'Heard the news ?' asked the Doctor.

'What news ?' said Mr. Fortescue, suddenly withdrawing his arm from Mr. Mortimer's, and standing still, fronting the Doctor with his arms folded. His tone sufficiently said that there could be no news in heaven or earth that would interest him.

'Now fail to interest him at your peril,' whispered Mr. Mortimer.

The Doctor nodded. 'Chinkiang is burnt, and the English all driven out.'

'Ah ! I heard that some days ago,' said Mr. Fortescue absently.

'Some days ago ! How ?'

'From the Chinese. On a certain day of a certain moon they said it was going to occur. And I suppose it has. They always know about these riots beforehand.'

'Yes, but how do you account for that?'

Mr. Fortescue looked surprised. 'I do not account for it. I have observed it, that is all.' But he was mechanically following them to their boat now as he talked. 'I am but a humble observer picking up facts upon the sands of time! Others may account for things. I cannot. Neither why we came here, nor—nor ——' His foot was stumbling over the gunwale of the boat.

'Why did you come here, by the way?' Mr. Mortimer suddenly threw over his shoulder, as if it had just occurred to him to wonder.

'Here, to this spot, do you mean? Or to China? Or why into the world at all?'

'About that last we were none of us consulted, old fellow. And we came to China because we had no idea what it was like. But why in the name of fortune did you come to this particular spot in China?'

'To repent, to purify my soul,' said Claude Fortescue, looking round appealingly to the clouds and mountains. 'Does repentance purify? Can anything make undone, or cleanse the soul from the stains it has contracted?'

He spoke as if to himself, with breaks that it seemed his thoughts filled up or answered. But his words were so unexpected, both the other men were silenced.

'Have some champagne?' said Mr. Mortimer after a pause, leading the way into the cabin. Mr. Fortescue took it, evidently not noticing what it was.

'Be careful,' whispered the Doctor.

'Well, I've no doubt we've all got enough to repent of, if we set about it,' said the young Consul, looking at the bubbles in his champagne. 'But was it necessary to choose such a particularly lonely place to come and repent in?'

'Can a man be rightly said to have chosen anything?' continued Mr. Fortescue. 'Given the conditions, could you or I have acted differently, or having so acted, become once more as if we had not? The place in which you found me seemed one in which a man might dedicate at least all the years that yet remained to him to thinking out such questions. Yet before I have even arrived at the first preliminaries I am interrupted——'

'My dear fellow, I am very sorry. But, talking of pre-

liminaries, will you wash your hands before eating? Ah no! You prefer to do so in the Chinese fashion after dinner. Quite right! All ready, boy.'

He sat and dined with them, eating indifferently of everything that was set before him. 'He was horribly hungry,' said the Doctor afterwards. 'Did you notice?' But what was puzzling them all the while was how to get him away without a scene.

'You've heard of poor Stuckey, I suppose? Abscesses of the liver! Came out after me,' said the Doctor. 'He has not stood the climate well.'

'A good fellow! A very good fellow!' and Mr. Fortescue fell off into a reverie, without apparently having taken in what he had been told.

'Phillips is dead at Hankow, quite suddenly,' said Mr. Mortimer. 'You knew Phillips, didn't you? Mrs. Phillips and the children have gone home. Jolly little woman, Mrs. Phillips. I wonder if she'd have me now. If the Government would only give me leave I'd go home and ask her,' he added airily.

'Mr. Phillips worked his life out for her sake and their children's. He protected her from insult as from penury during his lifetime. Must you choose the first moment after his death to insult——'

'Is it to insult her to talk of marrying her?'

'Yes, it is, when suggested as you suggested it.'

'My dear Fortescue, I beg Mrs. Phillips' pardon with all my heart, and yours too, if you wish. The last thing I thought of doing was to insult the plucky little woman, for whom I have the most profound respect.'

'Forgive me rather!' cried the other with a sudden passion of remorse. 'What am I, that I should presume to find fault with you or with any other man?'

'One of the best fellows in the world, if you'll come on to Ichang with us now. If not, my wounded feelings won't recover the severity of your castigation. Come, Fortescue, we haven't half talked our talk out, and we are not gentlemen at large like you. Our offices must see us in the morning. With your consent we'll start at once.'

'Was I severe?' asked the other, apparently unheeding, while at a silent signal from Mr. Mortimer the boat unmoored and began to drop quickly down stream. 'I know how far my superior you and indeed everyone are——'



'Oh, my dear Fortescue, we know all that,' said the acting Consul, holding out his hand.

Mr. Fortescue looked troubled at finding something inside his fingers. 'I had set myself specially to acquire the spirit of meekness, which seems to me rather a Chinese than a Christian virtue. It was indeed with that object, as also to purify my soul, as the Buddhists say——'

'And now, my dear fellow,' interrupted Mr. Mortimer, 'do you think that being alone has at all helped you to purify your soul, as you call it? I should have thought you had had enough solitude at Chungking.'

'Solitude at Chungking! Oh, no! such constant interruptions! Mails and missionaries!' exclaimed the ex-consular agent in accents of despair, almost wringing his hands as he spoke.

'Dear me! I wonder what you would think of London.' But Claude Fortescue was lost in thought.

'Mails every five days, from Europe. In Shanghai you only have them once a week. Yet they all come from Shanghai. It used to puzzle me at times,' he said. 'Mails every five days! And you *never* knew when they might be coming. They walked—across country—bridges broken. Then the missionaries—all where they had no right to be! And when they changed places, it was no better. I could do nothing for them—nothing I said.' He had been all but dropping off to sleep, but he had fairly roused himself now.

'He was pretty far gone. But I think we'll pull him through now, eh, Doctor?' when they had at last got him off to rest. He had talked without ceasing the whole way to Ichang, and now, having with difficulty been persuaded to lie down, had at once fallen fast asleep.

'If we might carry him off asleep, and put him on a steamer, and so down to Shanghai,' said the Doctor, 'he'd be all right. But for one thing there is no steamer here now, and for another, I don't believe we could get him on board of one.'

The Doctor was right. When Mr. Fortescue awoke he insisted on returning at once to his farmhouse in the Niukan. 'It is a fine house,' he said, 'finely situated, and with but one ornament—a coffin in the large entrance hall. What could any man desire more, a shelter during lifetime, a coffin after death?'

'I consider a coffin a great superfluity,' said the Doctor. 'Far better be wrapt in a sheet, or laid into a basket, and so

placed at once in the ground, "where there is nice dry lying," as the poor people say at home.'

'You Spartan!' cried Claude Fortescue. 'But I always was a Sybarite, and I dislike creeping things. Ah! how I dislike creeping things!' with a shudder. 'The Consulate at Chungking was surrounded by hawks; whole hundreds used to spend the night on the trees of the Confucian temple at its rear, and rouse up during the night if they were startled, with a great whirring of the wings, all together. I used to hear them saying:

'Whaur shall we gang and dine the night?

And—

We'll sit on his white hause bane.  
Over his banes when they are bare  
The wind shall blaw for evermair.

'They can't bury you properly, you know, at Chungking. It is all rock, so they just dig a little, and place the coffin there. I've often seen it, the top of the coffin just level with the rest of the earth. You want a strong one—a good strong coffin to stand that, you know. When I saw that coffin, that most substantial coffin in my farmhouse, I thought, "Ah, ha! you'll be safe in that! No creeping things! No getting in there to pike and peck."'

'But, my dear Fortescue, that is not your coffin. That is the coffin of your landlord, bought with the savings of many years. He would never sacrifice it to inclose your barbarian carcase, should occasion arise, which Heaven forefend! He feasts his eyes upon it every time he passes, thinking how safe he'll lie inside it. You can't both share one coffin.'

Claude Fortescue's face worked strangely.

'Do not go back, my dear fellow. I'll provide you with a coffin, I vow I will, the best Ichang can turn out, if you'll only stay and take potluck with me. It shall be of wood dug up in the Chien Chang valley, if you will, that has lain buried for hundreds of years, under the weight of which coolies have staggered all the length of the Brick Tea Road—if you will but stay.'

But the other laughed, turned on his heel, and went.

Next Saturday the Consul said doggedly, 'Well, it seems we know where we've got to spend our Saturday-to-Mondays now. But we mustn't go there straight. Fortescue is too sharp. He will be on the look-out. He knows we can't get away before Saturday, and he'll be expecting us now. When he

comes to think it over, I dare say he doesn't half approve of the way we fetched him away last time. We must sail straight by this time, and then hark back and take him by surprise, just when he has got a neglected, disappointed sort of feeling.'

'All very fine,' said the Doctor. 'But I should like to know how we are to get there at all with the river running like this. Do you know that it has risen eight feet again during the night?'

'Well, perhaps we can't manage it then. But I've done what I could. The boat is waiting for us above the whirlpools of Nantor. And we must have chairs as far as the beginning of the gorge—farther if you like. Only I want to stretch my legs a bit walking over Golden Mountain. I'm thinking of emulating Fortescue, and retiring as a hermit to the temple on the top. They are in want of a priest, and the post has been offered to me. And if you talk of views I don't see how you could have a finer one. It is true I can't stand upright there without feeling giddy. However, I could sit and meditate. Wonder how that poor fellow Fortescue is—got through his preliminaries yet, do you think, and begun to repent properly?'

'I am glad you are going with Mortimer,' said Mr. Ashurst, the Commissioner, gravely. 'Forgive me if I seem intrusive, as you are his medical adviser. But I do not like Mortimer's looks at all, and in this heat these expeditions to the Niukan seem to me—a—a very great risk.'

'He doesn't complain,' said the Doctor musingly. 'Until he does it seems officious to suggest—indeed, I should hardly like——'

'So I supposed,' said his chief serenely. 'So in a telegram to Peking some little while back I took occasion to mention it. Also in a letter to Dr. Berner, two mails ago, I told him I thought the Consul at Hankow ought to be informed—and a substitute ready. You see Peking is slow—is slow. It was very officious of me certainly—very. But everyone likes Gem. And I thought now you might do something about this mad-cap walk.'

'We'll take chairs all the way,' said the Doctor readily. 'And I'll swear I've hurt my foot. Of course I can't make Mortimer be carried. But I'll be carried myself, and then perhaps he will too. Only you see there's Fortescue!'

'Fortescue *must* be got away this time,' said Mr. Ashurst.

'If the worst comes to the worst Mortimer should order him to report himself. He may have no right to do so, and might get himself into trouble, of course— You don't think you could drug him ?'

'Wouldn't that get me into trouble ?' laughed the Doctor. 'But if there is only a steamer this time, we'll get him away somehow.'

And they did—both of them. There was a telegram from Peking, and a young man came up from Hankow on Saturday evening. Mr. Mortimer was to leave by the return steamer. They all went to see him off, Mr. Fortescue among them. And whilst the others slipped down the gangway, Claude Fortescue somehow got left behind deep in argument with Mr. Mortimer. It was only when the steamer was fairly under way, and he began to rave at finding himself thus carried off, that Mr. Mortimer fainted with the fatigue of having kept him so long engrossed in talk. And then, finding the other ill, Claude Fortescue forgot all about himself, and set to and nursed him like the tenderest of women. It was but too clear that Mr. Mortimer had not left Ichang a day too soon, as the doctors down river pronounced when they examined him. But the great, strong fellow had never been ill in his life, and both had not known what was the matter with him and had been determined not to give way. Now, however, he gave way with a vengeance, would not be left alone for a moment, and insisted on being waited on and humoured like a child. During the complete rest he thus got from self-introspection, Claude Fortescue's mind recovered its balance, and by the time the two arrived at the Japanese warm springs of Miyanoshta, they were both on the fair way to recovery.

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## CHAPTER XIV

### LOOKING BACK

Many sigh,  
But all in vain, for unreturning youth ;  
See to it, therefore, that thy only ship  
Be bound for no wrong port.

*Upward and Onward.*

FEW men start in life with higher aspirations than Claude Fortescue. Brought up by a mother of strong, practical piety, and of uncommon intellectual capacity, he also inherited the

sympathetic, chivalrous nature of his father, the army officer. His father's highly strung nerves and over-sensitiveness had been kept in check by the easy companionableness of a regiment, and the daily necessity for making himself understood by that decidedly practical and rather thick-headed fellow, Tommy Atkins. Nothing of the kind had there been to help the son, who from the outset had been sent to lonely stations in China, with only the companionship of books—the duty of studying such specially uncompanionable books as the Chinese classics—and cut off from all social restraints whatever. No one who has not been thus cut off knows how many safeguarding restraints there are in ordinary English life, where people's relations expect certain things, their friends expect certain things of them, servants ditto. There are certain decencies of dress to be observed, certain hours, certain usages of society. In China everything becomes an open question, and this openness is further widened by living amongst a people with absolutely set usages, all different from, indeed often opposed to, our own, being aimed at an opposite ideal. Most Europeans denounce all Chinese ways, yet insensibly pick up many of them notwithstanding. Some few praise some things Chinese, censure others. But there is a third class, that of Sinologues or would-be Sinologues, who wax enthusiastic over everything Chinese, and who in early youth are apt to discard European principles and rules of conduct, just because they are European, not Chinese.

Claude Fortescue's sympathetic nature predisposed him from the first to ally himself with this party. He read Chinese, talked Chinese, thought Chinese, only could not succeed in feeling Chinese. He longed to get at the inner life of the people, no longer to be always an outsider to the nation it was his lot to live amongst, to know something of their women, of their feelings towards their women. What need to describe the various stages—various gradations of feeling by which men brought up with Christian principles, amongst beautiful, high-minded English girls, at last sink to allying themselves with a Chinese girl of unknown parentage, too well-known character? So many of his set have done it before him! So many of his set will continue to do it, whilst people bring up their sons so carefully—send them out into the world so carelessly. He took to himself what he called to himself a Chinese wife. He treated her very considerately. At some expense, and considerably more pain of soul, he went

through all the business arrangements necessary to make her—a slave girl—nominally free. He even tried to care for her, and flattered himself he was succeeding in a sort of apathetic Chinese fashion. The girl was very modest, he thought, extraordinarily modest and well behaved in comparison with the English girls he had seen of the same class; she had a very soft voice, and a soft, merry little laugh. Her hands were small and well shaped, and skilful at many little house adornments to which Mr. Fortescue was not indifferent. He often compared her to a kitten about the house. Sometimes he wondered if she had a soul. He found no trace of it. Meanwhile he buried himself more and more in Chinese lore.

Religiously brought up as a strict Churchman, he had never but once had even the opportunity of going to church in China since he left Peking. And the Nonconformist missionaries he came across, always, because he was a consul, not a missionary, assumed that he would not care to join in their gatherings for prayer. Slowly but surely his old religious beliefs, not convictions, fell away from him. He went through no severe mental struggle, no agony of belief and disbelief—the China climate is not conducive to anything of the kind—they simply mouldered away in the hot rainy seasons, as the boots he had brought from England mouldered and became useless. Not at all because of any terrible temptation that overcame him. For even when he took this Chinese girl to live with him, he did it almost disliking doing so, merely thinking it possibly the best thing to be done under the circumstances, and the usual thing, he supposed, in China. Men who are by nature unlike other men are often passionately desirous to do what is usual. Then one day came that terrible missionary woman, as he had always since called Mrs. Betterton to himself. Her words, her appearance, her manner had outraged every one of his feelings as a gentleman, shocked his notions of womanly delicacy, and yet when she broke down he knew at once all she had meant to say, saw himself with her eyes, and was the more humbled to see how his conduct looked in the eyes of even so unrefined a woman as he thought she must be, to be able to speak to him on such a subject. Before that he had been heartily sick of his Chinese girl, weary of her companionship, which made him feel so much more lonely than when he was alone, disgusted with himself that he had acted after this fashion of other men, and now on a sudden he saw with a terrible distinctness

the great difference there was between his line of conduct and that related as pardonable (though not commendable) in the Old Testament ; from that followed by the richer members of the Chinese nation to this day, who often take a concubine, or concubines—as a concession to weakness—yet always with the idea of taking care of, bearing with and supporting these concubines for the rest of their existence, never with the preconceived idea of abandoning them some day like a coat that is the worse for use, any more than of putting them in the place of the lawful wife, the wife of a man's first youth, the mother of his children. He could not think now how he had ever failed to see the difference between this and a man's devoting the best years of his youth to a connection, always intended to be temporary, with a woman to whom he did not bind himself in any way, just in order that he might any day cast her aside, and marry some now impossible wife. He saw all this with a more sorrowful clearness of insight when the Chinese girl bore him a son, and he, who so believed in purity of race, with whom the doctrine of heredity was not a creed but a thing proved, saw himself responsible for having brought into the world a boy with square head, large stomach, and slanting eyes. It revolted him. After that he would have nothing further to do with the mother of his child, but took her down to Shanghai when he went, tried to make some suitable provision for her there, but failed. For what after all was suitable? Tried to make arrangements for his boy's being educated in a Eurasian school, yet had not the heart to insist on his being removed entirely from his mother's influence, so failed there also. It was then Mrs. Betterton had been consulted, she being one of the largest donors to the Eurasian school. She had recommended some relaxation of the rules in Mr. Fortescue's favour if he would make himself responsible for this relaxation not being abused. But this he did not know. Wearied and disgusted that he could not place his to himself most repulsive child as he had thought best for the child, he had left mother and son together, and started for Siberia, feeling no wish to see at once the home in which he had lived with his mother, the church where he had prayed as a boy, nor the kind old aunt who could never love him as of old, as he now thought, if she knew what manner of man he had become.

But during that long journey through Siberia he forgot

everything connected with his life in China, began to feel like a new man again, as if he were burdened with no duties nor responsibilities laid on him by the past. Only after it all he landed in England a far sadder man than he had expected to return, when he had gone out to China to be a student interpreter. Then he went to Northampton, and for about the whole of six months lived in the same house with Lilian Grey, aged seventeen, a child when he arrived, a woman when he went away. If she had not been so young, if she had not been so rich, if she had had any relations whom he could ask if he might, perhaps he would have offered. As it was he put it off, rather than decided he would not. Often and often he found himself wishing that there were spiritual directors in the Anglican Church whom he might ask if he were at liberty to offer. Over and over it he went. Was he? Was he not? The image of that hateful boy, not the boy's mother, generally weighed down the scale of the Noes, and made the Yeses kick the balance. At last he sailed in a hurry. When people have to do what they do not like they generally do it in a hurry. The only difference is, strong characters do it rather sooner than they need. Weak characters put it off till the last moment. Claude Fortescue had certainly put it off till the last moment, and nearly got himself into serious official trouble thereby. There were a hundred things to arrange. And when he found a place on the steamer at Brindisi, and it was clear, at last, that no benevolent catastrophe was interposing to prevent him from returning to China, as up till the last he had thought there must, he cursed his stars, and blamed himself by every term he knew of blame in English and Chinese, that he had not offered, had not at least written before leaving Aden ; that is, had not posted any of the many letters he had written, for written he had, both to his aunt and to Lilian herself. But then always the image of the pure, innocent girl, her candid soul looking out through her eyes so trustfully into his, had risen up beside him like a living presence, and prevented the finishing of those letters. And when he got to China he was glad he had not sent them. The boy had grown bigger, and there was a horrible, hateful likeness to himself and his own father, in spite of the Chinese features. The boy had got the flexible, Fortescue lips, and the easily wounded feelings that went with them, he feared. He himself was ordered to go to Chungking again. What could he do? The Eurasian school had refused to take the boy unless for ever



separated from his mother, whose evil influence they feared. She evidently expected to be taken to Chungking again, counted upon it. He suffered her to go with their child and himself.

He had meant to write to his aunt all the voyage; there was not a day he had not meant to write to her, intending sometimes to send a letter inclosed, sometimes a message, to Lilian Grey. It was because he never could decide about this latter, that no letter went to Miss Gardiner. Arrived at Shanghai, confronted by that mother and child, he felt it as impossible to write to the sweet old maiden lady as to the young girl, yet how his heart went out to them both! How it went out to them through that long, long river voyage he seemed to know by heart already! whilst he tried to train his boy, and was tortured by his bastard appearance, his low gestures, his likeness to both parents. As to the mother, she had no power to torture him—she was nothing to him now but an ignorant Chinese woman—nothing kittenish any longer. Only the soft voice and the soft laugh remained. But she seemed fond of himself, pleased to be with him again. This oppressed him. She had learnt, too, to read his moods, forestall his wishes, and gradually more and more effaced herself, yet evidently for his sake. This touched him. He felt ungrateful, told himself this was the life he had chosen, all that he was fit for, or deserved, and tried vainly at least to seem to reciprocate her affection. So it went on day by day, day by day, no resolution taken, only a gradual drifting, till one day a little blue-eyed girl was born. Claude Fortescue sat in his lonely room at the Chungking Consulate, or paced up and down the gallery round the courtyard, holding his head in his hands, trying to think the situation out; no English man or woman ever entering his doors to disturb the gloomy current of his thoughts, and the rain sopping down day after day. It is extraordinary how much it rains in Chungking—not pouring as it does at some times in other parts of China, but just sopping down day after day all the year round, excepting in the height of summer, when the whole rock heats up into the hundreds, and the coffins stream out through the city gates. Even when the rain does hold up, there is nowhere but the graves outside to walk amongst, where the only sign of life is at the coming of a new corpse. It was then he used to listen to the hawks at night, and think how they would pick his bones. For weeks at a time he never left the Consulate, just paced up

and down inside it, thinking, always thinking, till he was almost mad with thought. In the end he sent the mother and children away, simply because he could not any longer bear her presence in the house, not because he thought it the right thing to do, or anything. He had been studying Taoist lore, but he did not study it any longer now ; tried rather to imagine himself Lao-tse and evolve Taoism out of himself. If there had been any consular work to do, it might have been different. But there was none. What missionaries there were passing through gave the Consulate a clear berth, as was perhaps natural. No one—after Mrs. Betterton's one unsuccessful attempt—felt that he had a message to deliver to Claude Fortescue's soul.

These men and women feeling such an imperious need to come all the way from England, and learn the Chinese language to deliver the gospel of glad tidings to God's Chinese, yet not one of them had even a fragment of a message to God's Englishman sitting alone in his very dreary Consulate through what they all alike call one of the most trying climates in China !

During all the burning days of summer, when the whole walled city of Chungking heats up like an oven, rock and all ; during all the dreary days of winter, there had not been a day when Claude Fortescue had not thought of his sweet old aunt, had not seen Lilian Grey as by his side. In thought, indeed, he had lived almost as much with them in their old-world sitting-room and quiet garden at Northampton as in China, only selfishly himself getting what joy he could out of their imaginary presence, rather than thinking how it might be with them now—*never* pausing to consider what might be the effect upon them of never hearing from himself.

As time went on, whatever he did, wherever he went, the vision of Lilian Grey went with him, the girl who, as he thought to himself, might, if everything had been different, have been his wife. No other woman ever could be. Sometimes he took out the little faded handkerchief, and knotted it, as he had seen the girl do. But his brain nearly gave way when he did this. Little wonder, when he saw her really standing before him on that pinnacle in the Niukan Gorge, that he thought it must be her dead self come back to visit him. He had sought that spot with the idea that there, alone with nature, he might, according to the Buddhist phrase, renew his heart, might repent with such a power of repentance that the past might be undone. When he realised that

she was alive, with Mrs. Betterton, her cousin—come to China, on her way to Chungking, where he had lived with that other—he at once pictured her to himself with all his past laid out before her, and a dull despair came over him. All was for ever over! There was a greater gulf between them than if he had already been married to another. For then, at least, he might have held out his hands to her, been friends with her. Now to attempt to do so seemed to him like a sullying of the girl's pure presence, a taking advantage of her being so far ignorant. But his already shaken nerves nearly gave way in the struggle. The impulse to fold her in his arms and spring with her into the swift-flowing river was so strong that he dared not approach her, dared not look at her, till her boat had already moved off from the shore, lest that impulse might overmaster him.

And when the two friends sought him that Sunday afternoon, he was as near self-destruction as a man often gets without committing it. For in the expression of Lilian's eyes, as she looked back at him, in the trembling of her lips, he had seen how cruelly he had hurt her, and that she, too, loved him, and was conscious at last that she did so. And he asked himself, Could the proud, girlish heart recover from the pain of having given herself unasked, as she might think, and been repelled so brutally? And his heart told him No!

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## CHAPTER XV

### HASTE TO THE WEDDING!

With the bride all in white, and your body in blue,  
Did you walk up the aisle—the genteelst of men?  
When I think of that beautiful vision anew,  
Oh! I seem but the biffin of what I was then!

TOM HOOD.

I forget whether the bride's character preceded or followed her; but it was a lottery placard, and blazoned her as One of Ten Thousand.

TOM HOOD, *A Marriage Procession*.

ALL Hankow was in a state of excitement over Miss Neligan's wedding. It is true she had not succeeded in persuading any lady of the community to give her house-room, and had been obliged to continue contented with missionary hospitality; but she had quite early in the day convinced Dr. Berner that

as he had entertained Mrs. Betterton, her chaperon—Miss Neligan was great on the subject of chaperons now—it was his duty to stand by her *in loco parentis*, and give her away. To this the good-natured Commissioner had readily consented. But then had appeared the rock on which the whole wedding festivities had nearly gone to pieces. It seemed natural that the wedding breakfast should take place in Dr. Berner's large empty house, but then, there being no mistress to it, both Mrs. Robinson and Mrs. G. J. Smith wished to officiate in that capacity. Miss Neligan flew round, volubly pouring out a history of her difficulties. 'Why not have the breakfast quietly in the house of the missionaries with whom you are staying?' 'What! In those small rooms! And not have a society wedding at all! And me, who am thirty, and not likely to be married again, even if Mr. FitzHugh should pop off sudden, like poor Mr. Phillips. And I think he has a good constitution. I wouldn't marry him if I didn't think he had a good constitution. Been a bit wildish, perhaps, but men are like that, even at home, and he has kept sober for a long time, he tells me. But you wouldn't have me not have an elegant wedding, my one chance, would you?'

In the end the new Consul came to the rescue. He was a most good-natured man, and he said laughingly he had no idea of being set aside on such a festal occasion. Dr. Berner might give the bride away as being the oldest friend, but he and Mrs. Ashley would give the wedding breakfast at the Consulate, and Mrs. Ashley would make the wedding cake if required. Mrs. Ashley was great at cakes. Then Miss Neligan explained that Mr. FitzHugh's brother officers were presenting the cake, having already ordered it from the French confectioner's at Shanghai; she did not, however, lose the opportunity. She thanked the Consul for his kindness, said she should never, never forget it, nor Mrs. Ashley's either in being ready to make the cake, and would Mrs. Ashley be so very kind as to do so, not for the great occasion, but for the afternoon previous?

'What happens on the afternoon previous?' asked the Consul.

'Why! the exhibition of presents! I could not think of accepting so many beautiful things from my very, very kind friends in Hankow, without showing how much I appreciate their generosity by making an exhibition of them in the usual way, with a ticket giving the donor's name affixed to each.'

‘Well, that had better be at the Consulate too, I suppose?’

‘If you please,’ said Miss Neligan, ‘because of the size of the rooms. And I thought of tea and cake.’

‘Exactly,’ said the Consul, laughing inwardly. ‘Jane, my dear, we shall have to set out the dining-room twice. Miss Neligan wants an exhibition of presents the afternoon before her wedding. In for a penny in for a pound, I suppose. And she says she’d like tea and cake.’

‘Does she *indeed*?’ said the Consul’s wife, opening her eyes till they looked quite round. ‘Well, we rather like parties, don’t we? And we must have given something to the community; so now this will do as well as anything. We shall give Miss Neligan’s wedding as our entertainment. By the way, as she is so specific, does she want a dance after the breakfast, or will tennis do?’

‘Oh, I should think tennis is as much as we should venture on. Recollect the missionaries are all coming.’

When it became known the breakfast was to take place at the Consulate, Miss Neligan’s wedding began to assume vice-regal proportions. The Russian community declined to be left out, and having sent an envoy to ascertain what would be most acceptable, they engaged to furnish the champagne. They also intimated that, if desired, two little Russian girls would be happy to officiate as bridesmaids, never having seen an English wedding, and would, if required, even wear the national costume on the occasion.

Miss Neligan was delighted—her wedding was becoming international. She thought nothing now of asking one of the largest English buyers for ‘musters, as you call them.’

‘Oh, you want some tea, do you? Yes, certainly. I can’t spare my musters; we have hardly begun our buying, waiting till your Russian friends are done. But I’ll send you some of this season’s.’

He did, and a silver sugar basin as well. Were the presents not to be shown and ticketed? Miss Neligan was again delighted. She rushed round to Mrs. G. J. Smith in high excitement.

‘Isn’t it lovely?’ she said. ‘Lovely! Oh, I am sure—the kindness of people! The only thing I do hope is that I sha’n’t have too many of the same article. Mr. FitzHugh’s captain is giving me a silver teapot, I know, for he asked me to choose, and I chose that. He is getting it made at Kiukiang, but I am so afraid you and Mrs. Robinson may give me the same

thing, for of course it is so natural a present here in Hankow.'

'What is Mrs. Robinson giving you?' asked Mrs. Smith, her eyes glittering.

'Well, I did hope it would have been a bracelet,' said Miss Neligan with a sigh. 'A married woman requires a handsome bracelet or two, in my opinion. But Mr. Robinson's business is not doing very well, I believe, so I dare say she can't afford so much. And she means to give me some lace from the convent here.'

'That's so like Mrs. Robinson,' cried Mrs. Smith with jealous glee. 'She likes to make herself out such a patron of the Sisters, buying more than anyone else; and I shouldn't be the least surprised if it weren't that identical old flounce she has made herself such a guy by wearing all the winter. I know she must have felt how old-fashioned she looked in it, though she pretended not to; and she is so stingy it would be just like her to give away something she found she had made a mistake in buying for herself. But never mind, dear; I'll give you a bracelet.'

'Oh, my dear Mrs. Smith, you are too good—you really are! I shall get quite spoiled among you all—I really shall. And you know the breakfast is to be at the Consulate, and the little Trime-ti-ma-ti—oh, I can't ever get through that name—but you know those two dear little girls are to be bridesmaids, and wear their national costumes.'

'You don't say so!' exclaimed Mrs. Smith, all excitement. 'My little girl will be bridesmaid too, if you like. She is only three, but she is very good; and she has just got a new dress out from home—white, with a pale blue moiré sash. Oh, such a lovely sash! Or she could wear another colour if you thought it would go better with the Russian dress. I could lend her something of mine. Come and choose.'

Then Mrs. G. J. Smith met Dr. Berner on the Bund, and asked him what he was going to give.

'I hear there is to be an exhibition of presents at the Consulate the day before, and the little Russian girls are to be bridesmaids, and my little girl, and it is to be quite in style.'

'Is that so?' said Dr. Berner rather ruefully. 'Your little girl too! I knew that Mrs. Robinson's——'

'What! that gawk! Oh, poor Nellie! what a size she will look! But she is a dear child, Nellie is! I should love Nellie if it were not for her mother, the most insincere,

manœuvring—— But have you settled on your present yet? As you are to give her away, it must be something handsome, I suppose—cut us all out,’ with a self-conscious laugh, remembering her promised bracelet, which she trusted would be voted the handsomest thing there.

‘Oh, I couldn’t do that,’ said Dr. Berner, waving his hands in deprecation. ‘I understand people are all giving magnificent presents—quite magnificent, though I cannot understand for what reason. But let that pass! No, the truth is, I never thought about the present in agreeing to give Miss Neligan away. And I don’t quite know now what Mrs. Berner will say, for I understand that she relies upon me for the wedding gown.’

‘For the wedding gown! But that is rather difficult for you to choose.’

‘It would be. I had thought of deputing a committee of ladies; but Miss Neligan has relieved me of all trouble in the matter. She has selected her dress, and had it made. I only heard she said she need not consider the cost, because she supposed the gentleman who had undertaken to stand for her *in loco parentis* would at least pay for her wedding gown. Now, did that mean that she has some vague expectation that I might perhaps pay for all her trousseau? I do not mind the gown so much; it is not as expensive as it might be. But I *could* not do more. And as it is, I do not know what Mrs. Berner will say. I hesitate to write to her—I do indeed. She will be sure to think I have behaved weakly. And yet I am not conscious—I do not know what I could have done differently, unless I had refused to give Miss Neligan away from the first,’ said the poor Commissioner, shaking his head ruefully. ‘And that seemed so little to do. I never thought of its costing a silk dress. My wife herself would like just such a silk dress. And it will be about the time of her birthday when she gets my letter. She will assuredly think I have been weak.’

‘Send her another just like it,’ suggested Mrs. Smith.

‘What! buy two silk dresses in one month! You do not know Mrs. Berner,’ cried the Commissioner, shaking his head. ‘By the way, it may interest you to learn that I have just heard, from what I take to be the very best possible authority, that divorce proceedings are to be instituted.’

‘Hurrah!’ cried Mrs. Smith, quite forgetting herself for the moment. ‘Oh, how dreadfully—how dreadfully small

Mrs. Robinson will feel! She has stood up for her so; and they were *always* together, you know. Oh, I must go to see her at once—and ask about Nellie's dress. Perhaps there is something I could lend her. That poor child outgrows her clothes so.'

When the first officer returned to Hankow he was truly astonished at the proportions Miss Neligan's wedding had assumed, and could hardly believe it was his own also. His brother officers had brought the cake, and the captain had brought his silver teapot from Kiukiang, with a dragon for the spout and a dragon for the handle, and they had expected a quiet little affair at a missionary's house, and all to drink hot tea and be on their best behaviour. Now they suddenly found that the coming of their steamer had been looked out for as forerunning the great social event of the season, and that the whole place was invited to the wedding, and the whole place intended going. Miss Neligan had early enough discovered that not a man invited but would send an offering of some sort, and so not a day had passed without her going round to the Consulate with fresh suggestions as to invitations. All the river steamers in port must be invited—that is their officers, for were they not all friends of her husband? All the missionaries and the generally resident community had been invited from the first. Then all the Russians had to be invited because of the little bridesmaids and the champagne. Next she thought of the tea steamers. Were they not all merchant steamers, in the same service with her husband, so she pleaded. 'And it must be so dull for the poor fellows lying there waiting for the tea.' Then there was not a day but some new Chaszee was not drawn into the net on one pretext or another. Mrs. Ashley was good-nature itself. She was afraid Miss Neligan was making herself a little ridiculous, but really everyone seemed very glad of a party. She was only firm upon one point. In several cases Miss Neligan said she thought it would be enough if only the man in question were asked to the 'afternoon previous.' She was sure the poor fellow would be quite satisfied. But Mrs. Ashley was like adamant about this. No man should be invited to the exhibition of presents who was not also invited to the wedding breakfast. 'If they are to be dragged in to presenting her with something, they shall at least have as much fun as we can give them for it. But I am really very thankful for that Russian champagne. The thing is growing bigger than we



expected. I am beginning to think of having it upon the lawn, only then it would be sure to rain,' she added disconsolately, for it was the rainy season ; the rainy season and the tea season always occurring together at Hankow.

So when Mr. FitzHugh landed, and walked along the Bund, every man he met nodded and squeezed his hand and said, 'I'll be there, old fellow,' till the poor man felt, as he said, perfectly bamboozled.

An Irishman, however, always rises to the occasion, and when the wedding morning broke Mr. FitzHugh only looked the better, and dressed himself with more care, because Hankow was making a sort of Queen's birthday out of his marrying Miss Neligan. He had seen the wedding presents the day before, and been completely dazzled. There they were all on exhibition, the champagne, the dress, everything, all ticketed in Miss Neligan's own best handwriting. And the display of Chinese silver in the room would have been enough to stock a jeweller's shop. But there were other even more useful presents ; soft Hankow velvet, looking as if yards and yards of it would pass through the traditional ring, and silks of every delicate shade, Ningpo carvings, Canton ivories, Mrs. Robinson's lace flounce—'the very one she used to wear ! I knew it ! Did you ever see anything so mean ?' cried Mrs. Smith. And resplendent, alone in its golden glory, pillowed upon white cotton wool, lay Mrs. G. J. Smith's own gift, a bracelet of Chinese gold, so pure and soft, that by a tap you could make it lie out straight, or curl it round your arm as you wished. Everyone was looking at everyone else's present, and chaffing each other on the amount they had been 'roped in for,' as they called it. And yet everyone had a pleasant feeling, for almost everyone had been generous. The ladies of the community, indeed, had had a grand time choosing presents for the gentlemen, who were too busy to do so for themselves. And they now showed off with some pride what they had chosen to one another, and to the other ladies' men friends. Everyone was satisfied ; whilst up and down the room Miss Neligan beamed and pushed her way. If ever a young woman had cause to be satisfied with the result of her labours, Miss Neligan had, and she alone knew how hard she had worked for it all. But Mr. FitzHugh and his captain knew nothing of this, as together they made their way round the room, and examined the presents, and looked at one another, and wondered. The captain's silver teapot—which he

had thought so magnificent as he brought it up, which they had all gazed at with admiration and thought it so liberal of him to give ; 'but I value FitzHugh,' the captain had said—that teapot looked just like all the others, only one of the presents now, while the brother officers' cake looked alarmingly small in view of the company assembled. The captain looked at Mr. FitzHugh in sheer amazement, while Mr. FitzHugh by degrees began to smile all over like Miss Neligan. He had never thought he would have the luck to get a real Irish girl for his wife, had indeed already offered to a Eurasian, but she happened to be bespoke. And now he began to suspect that he had not half appreciated his future wife's genuine worth. They were to go to the community bungalow for their honeymoon, and that too was startling ; for it was the first time it had been lent for an occasion of the kind, and this was just the season when community bungalows are especially in request. Nevertheless the FitzHughs were to have it for their brief honeymoon. And Mr. FitzHugh looked in the glass, as he dressed himself on his wedding morning, and thought he had never noticed before what a good-looking fellow he really was. But then he had never seen himself before in such a sunshine of prosperity.

The wedding was a great success. The little church—that the English Government first built, then handed over to the community, and which has been since served by the missionary body, irrespective of denominations, each missionary in turn, however, being bound over to read in it the Church Service, and that only, though free afterwards to preach what doctrine he pleased—the little church barely sufficed for the throng of guests, being already decorated up to the very roof with all the flowers Hankow could spare from the wedding breakfast. One of the Customs Outdoor Staff, who occasionally officiated as organist, had been given special leave of absence for the occasion, and had learnt the 'Wedding March' on purpose for Miss Neligan. He got nervous and played them in a little fast, but it was impossible to mistake the tune, and everyone felt that Hankow was doing the right thing, as Miss Neligan swept up the aisle on Dr. Berner's arm, looking quite handsome in his present, a silver grey silk, that set off the flush upon her cheek, as she realised that upon her still lay the burden of the day. For the Commissioner required prompting, and although he had most painstakingly studied the English Service for the occasion, had yet no idea of where he should pause, nor when

he should lead the bride forward. Six bridesmaids equally ignorant followed Miss Neligan. The two Russian children looked beautiful, but their one idea was to see everything themselves; the two missionary children were Congregationalists, and had never been inside a church before. Mrs. Smith's three-year old was entirely engrossed by her own shoes, which had big bows and buckles of her mama's upon them. Only Nelly Robinson even realised that they had all to stand close behind Miss Neligan, so she pulled the little throng along, all overweighted by their immense bouquets. For Miss Neligan was in luck again, the roses were out, and everyone had contributed their roses. And while Nelly Robinson pulled the children along, Miss Neligan pulled the Commissioner, only a little less evidently. Mr. FitzHugh with his best man, the second officer—he had not known the wedding was going to be the affair of the season when he asked him, and it had seemed then a convenient arrangement, seeing they were sure both to be in port together—they felt quite out of it, standing up by the altar helpless. But Miss Neligan pulled it all through. And fortunately an American missionary of the new High Church, that aspires to be called the American Church, had been willing to read the service, and being an impassioned Churchman was quite competent to conduct it even without the bride's help. Whilst the choir for a week past had been practising 'The voice that breathed o'er Eden.' So at last Mr. and Mrs. FitzHugh walked down the aisle again, this time together, the bridesmaids following with difficulty, because they were always being caught up and kissed, very much to poor Nelly Robinson's disapproval, as she had distinctly understood it was only the bride who was to be kissed. But the two little Russians in their national costume looked like such beautiful big dolls, and seemed so decidedly to expect it, that this set people off, and then the little missionary children and Mamie Smith all looked so sweet it seemed hard to leave them out. Only Nelly Robinson looked too tall as she marshalled the others.

A broker had lent his carriage—as a rule it is only brokers who keep carriages at Hankow, the concession, with which roads terminate, being too small for anyone else to require one—so the bride and bridegroom drove to the Consulate amid a storm of rice and rose leaves. But the children walked, and even so were barely two minutes behind them. Then the ceremony at the Consulate had to be gone through, after which

alone Mr. and Mrs. FitzHugh were legally man and wife. And then the feasting began, but of course the healths and the speech-making were the special feature. Hankow is great at healths. Mr. FitzHugh was not brilliant on the occasion, but his captain, who had begun life as an able-bodied seaman in the Royal Navy, made a rattling good speech, delighting everyone. Then a Russian proposed a health in Russian, and after that the fun grew fast and furious, till a missionary got up and said rather solemnly, 'By the bride's special request, I ask you now to drink to absent friends, and especially to Miss Grey and the party now struggling with the Yangtze rapids.'

'Miss Grey and absent friends!' cried everyone. 'We must drink that standing. Yes, always stand to drink the ladies. Where's the song? the song!' Thus adjured, one of the most popular members of the Hankow community, who always gave the same song at every merry meeting at which there was any question of the ladies, turned up without more ado, and everyone joined in the chorus. 'Here's a health to all good lasses!' swelled round the room. Then 'Miss Grey!' cried Dr. Berner, waving his glass. 'Miss Grey! *Hoch!*' and 'Miss Grey!' cried every man emptying his glass.

Mrs. FitzHugh began to cry. 'She is such a dear,' she said. 'And I wish she could be as happy as I am.'

'I wish they had gone up a month sooner,' said the missionary who at her request had proposed the toast. 'If they hadn't been such a large party, and Hankow so overcrowded during the tea season, I'd have urged their waiting till the autumn. As it is I suppose May is all right, June of course wouldn't do,' with a shake of the head, 'and July and August impossible!'

'What on earth possessed you to say "struggling with the Yangtze rapids"? 'asked the Consul afterwards.

'I don't know.'

'I hope it is not a bad augury.'

'So do I. After all I only said "with" not "in." I did not say "in,"' half as if he were afraid he had.

'No, you did not say "in." Certainly there is a difference. And I hope our drinking their healths made them feel more comfortable.'

If they could only have seen them as they drank their healths! Mrs. FitzHugh had had an intuition for a moment, and she had wept. She said afterwards, just for a moment

she had seen Miss Grey's face quite distinctly, and it had looked so white and terrified she could not help crying.

It was a brief honeymoon, after which Mr. and Mrs. FitzHugh started for Shanghai, for there was no house-room to be had at Hankow during the tea season. Otherwise Mrs. FitzHugh would greatly have preferred to remain in the scene of her triumphs. But her husband said he had secured nice rooms for her in a boarding-house at Hong Kew, which before their wonderful wedding he had thought all that the heart of woman could desire. He felt more doubtful about it now. The captain, however, insisted on giving up his own suite of cabins to the bridal couple, so they were to go down in state. Just as they were starting the Ichang steamer arrived with Mr. Mortimer and Fortescue on board. Great was the disappointment at Hankow at their thus giving them the go-by, as they said, but Mr. Mortimer was under orders to proceed as quickly as possible to Shanghai, and Mr. Fortescue shut himself up in his cabin, and refused to see anyone. 'I think I have heard Miss Grey speak of him,' remarked Mrs. FitzHugh.

## CHAPTER XVI

### A JAPANESE BATH

There are hopes that the spirit hardly names,  
     And songs that it mutely sings,  
 There are good resolves and exalted aims,  
     There are longings for nobler things;  
 There are sounds and visions that hannt our lot,  
     Ere they vanish, or seem to die;  
 And the other side of the moon (why not?)  
     Is the far bourne where they fly!

EDGAR FAWCETT.

The old faiths grown more wide,  
 Purer and glorified,  
 Are still our lifelong guide.

LEWIS MORRIS.

AND now by people in England it will be assumed that seeing Hankow was entirely given up to merry-making *and tea*! there could be no truth in the rumour of a riot at Chinkiang, on the way between it and Shanghai. But China is so vast, and calamities there on so colossal a scale, that if every port

were to weep when another were in mourning, there would be no end to it. There is always a famine from drought or flood somewhere, and of late years riots have been *à l'ordre du jour*. People all get accustomed to them except the sufferers. And they, if much affected in health, go home, and are fast forgotten in China, where there are always new-comers, who have only vaguely heard on the way out of what happened before they arrived. So when the steamer with the bridal party arrived at Chinkiang it was a surprise to Mrs. FitzHugh, though she had heard all about it, to find the community there still living as best they could in the two hulks, that habitually lay there for the convenience of steamers, all still armed and uncomfortably clothesless. Indeed they were all in borrowed garments; for what clothes they had escaped in had been sent down to Shanghai as patterns for new ones. For all the foreign houses had been burnt by the furious Chinese mob with all their contents. The Europeans had only escaped in what they happened to be wearing at the moment. But why should other places mourn because Chinkiang was driven out? Anti-foreign riots have always occurred from time to time in China ever since foreigners first forced an entrance into the land, that from the time of Pliny and before has always been averse to strangers. Hankow's turn might come another day, but there was no idea as yet of any organised plan, nor that there was any more cause for alarm this year than any other year. And the subject was a disagreeable one. So they talked by preference of the wedding at Hankow, and having heard first that no one had been killed, and that the women and children had all been sent down to Shanghai at once, the riot had been no further discussed at Hankow, and people there dismissed the thought of it from their minds, as they dismissed the thought of the elections in England, or anything else that did not immediately concern themselves. A few years' continuance of this line of conduct narrows the interests considerably, and sometimes makes conversation difficult, but the overseas men, as Mr. Rudyard Kipling calls them, pronounce it practical. And to be practical is generally the height of the business man's aspirations in essentially practical China, where to live and make money is under any circumstances so difficult, people must be looked upon pitifully if they even sometimes mistake their measures to make life livable. As to Shanghai—outside the consular circle—

Shanghai society ignored that Chinkiang had ever existed, although it was the first port of call for steamers going up the Yangtze. Shanghai looks upon itself as situated upon the sea, and its interests are cosmopolitan. As to Ichang and the smaller outports they discussed at great length and backwards and forwards all that had happened at Chinkiang, as bearing upon the general question of the rights of foreigners in China, and the future development of the Empire, and such other large general questions as form the staple of conversation in places which have no interests of their own. But Hankow had its own business to attend to.

When, however, confronted with the blackened ruins everyone inevitably became interested, and Mr. FitzHugh waxed voluble, telling as he had told before, only now with greater detail, how theirs, on his last down trip, had been the first steamer to find the place blazing; how the ladies and children had come on board, one barefooted, having lost her slippers as she ran; how one lady had been carried out of her bed, where she lay dangerously ill with fever, and another had been brought on board just expecting a baby, that had been born on the way down, and not a rag of clothing among them, except what they had on. 'We all lent our clothes to the men. Some men went down with their wives to see after them. But our clothes weren't any use for the ladies. We just gave them sheets and towels to do what they could with. The Consul's wife wore my socks, and a pair of old slippers of the captain's. And they all wore our hats as far as they would go. But we hadn't enough for the number. We had to get some from the Chinese passengers, for it was very curious they all seemed to have lost their hats.'

'Weren't they dreadfully frightened?' asked the bride.

'Well, I don't know as they were. Those in bed perhaps. But the others seemed more angry than frightened. "The wretches!" they said. "How could they take mine and my children's things?"'

'Wretches!' said Mr. Mortimer between his teeth, contemplating the scene, as he heard all the particulars from the Chinkiang Consul, who had come off at once to see him and Mr. Fortescue. The whole story was new then, and inexplicable. Why had the riot occurred? Men had their theories, but none quite satisfied the two new-comers from up river. Mr. Mortimer combated them all, while Claude Fortescue sat

and smoked, and evidently was not satisfied with any explanation laid before him.

'Oh, Mr. Mortimer, do you think it is safe for my friends up river, dear Miss Grey and all?' asked the bride, who had made acquaintance with him on the way down, and who now always spoke of her friends up river as of Miss Grey's party, being anxious to establish herself in a position in society, and disown all connection with missionaries. 'She is such a dear sweet girl, and it is a real shame to take her to Chungking, I think. Indeed I do. Only I never knew the Chinese were that savage.'

Mr. Fortescue had ceased smoking, and Mr. Mortimer was watching him.

'Of course it is not safe up country. It is not safe anywhere in China. We are all of us sitting on a volcano. They don't like us. And they'll get rid of us if they can.'

'Oh, but Miss Grey! I do hope they won't kill her.'

Mr. Fortescue looked up; but he had rebuffed all her attempts at establishing an acquaintance, and she was not noticing him. Mr. Mortimer was, however. 'What do you think, Fortescue?' he said.

But Mr. Fortescue did not answer. He continued to look at Mrs. FitzHugh. 'Where did you meet Miss Grey?' he asked.

Then she poured out to him the whole story, how they had all come out together, how she had intended to be a missionary, but had been disgusted by the naked bodies, and the opium, and all, and then how Mr. FitzHugh——

His attention flagged while she talked about herself, but whenever she mentioned Miss Grey his eyes were at once riveted to her face, and he drank in every word she said. Mrs. FitzHugh was quick to notice this, and adapted her conversation accordingly. It was the first time Mr. Fortescue had listened to anyone for months. It was evidently an effort.

'Oh, he'll do!' said Mr. Mortimer when he saw he was actually listening. 'But what a fool I am to care! What's he to me? Or the girl either? Besides, he has got one child at least, and a *woman*!'—he had heard all about it by now. 'When those pro-Chinese fellows go in for that sort of thing, they ought to stick to it. He can't throw them over altogether anyhow, and Miss Grey doesn't look the kind of girl—What



on earth does it matter? It will be all the same a hundred years hence anyhow. Fortescue, I've got this pain coming on again. I thought the Doctor gave you something.'

In a minute Mr. Fortescue was the attentive nurse once more. As a nurse he was truly admirable. And the very touch of his hand seemed to do something to send the other's pain away.

'It is my opinion,' growled Mr. Mortimer, 'the Chinkiang people have only themselves to thank. They had a concession given them for the use of Europeans only, and they've tried for higher rents by letting the Chinese come in in whole crowds and live among them. It never can be safe for long for a handful of Europeans to live crowded up amongst thousands of Chinese. Trouble is sure to come sooner or later. It has come here somehow, and we've seen what's come of it. There ought to be no open ports without concessions, and those concessions ought to be *for Europeans only*.'

'One sees more of the Chinese ways living among them,' murmured Mr. Fortescue. 'To the ethnological student a concession is a drawback. There is none at Chungking, of course.'

'Why, my dear fellow, that is not even an open port. The question has only to come forward to be discussed when the steamer gets there, if it ever does. Of course it is not the rocks and rapids of the gorges are the difficulty. It is that fool of an English minister of ours, who made me stop her. Once let her go up, the trick would have been done. And it can be. And there's none who agrees sooner to a done thing than the Chinese. Only they are bound to object all they can first. Oh, I could have sworn—and I did—when I got that telegram to stop the steamer from making the try. It is ruin to the company, I believe. They're done for. And the steamer is done for, running on a route she wasn't built for. And Chungking is done for too. Now those who go there, go there at their peril. They're like rats in a box, there is no getting away for them.'

'Just so, just so,' murmured Mr. Fortescue yet more dreamily. 'But for God's good angels I have no fear. *He* watches over them.'

'Ah! you think so, do you?'

'If I did not——' He paused for a moment, then said earnestly, 'Heaven is watching over all of us, I believe. Only

some of us are walking in the way He has set us, whilst others have gone very far astray.'

'I dare say. But, I say, do you think it would do any good making the whole Chinese people Christian?'

'I don't know—I suppose so. Of one thing I am quite sure——' He paused.

'What's that?'

'That it would do you and me good.'

'What! To be missionaries?'

'No, to become Christians. If not that, what are we? What have we to steer by? You and I will never be real Taoists, or Buddhists, or even Confucianists.'

'No, that's true.'

'Then how are we to attain the highest life of which we are capable? And that is the task a man has to set himself, whether here or in England, without attaining to which he has but lived in vain. "*Non si bonum sed si bene*," said the old Roman casuists. And so what matters it what I have accomplished if I am not myself my best self?'

'You've got beyond me there, old fellow,' moaned the other. 'This pain is the devil, I think. But I don't know what makes you think I'm not a Christian. I always thought I was. I've always meant to be. Of course, one talks—and you clever fellows have doubts, I believe. I suppose it is because I'm stupid, but I've never had any doubts. I say the prayers my mother taught me, they're good enough for me.'

'Go to sleep, then, good boy,' said the other, seeing the burning flush on his cheek, and laid his hand on his forehead, and stood beside him, till he was asleep. 'Happy, happy fellow!' he said to himself. 'O God! Never to have fallen away. Who would not have liver complaint by preference?'

They were the most devoted pair by the time they arrived at Miyanoshta. All the way to Yokohama they sat and talked together, and seemed to have told each other everything. There was only one subject they both avoided, and Lilian Grey's name was never mentioned between them. Gem Mortimer knew, without being told, what the other felt, and he did not consider it possible he should ever marry her. He was a North of Ireland man, and they never have quite the English standard; but besides this he had his own ideas of right and wrong, not very many perhaps, but what he had he was very firm about.

At Miyanoshta they met Mr. Stuckey, already on his way

back from British Columbia, and comparatively rosy. He seemed rather weak still, but very merry. It had been a false alarm apparently. He was full of praises of his inspector-general, whose promptitude and kind consideration had saved his life, he said. He was also paying great attentions to a party of ladies from Yokohama, and wanted to introduce them. 'It is quite safe,' he said, 'guaranteed to have no after-consequences. Yokohama doesn't marry. Kobe does—to a girl. We are going excursions together every day, and have great fun.'

'But they had not yet been to British Columbia, and were bashful,' Mr. Mortimer said. Miyanoshita, however, is not the place for hermits, and before they even quite knew where they were, they were talking to everyone in the hotel—Japanese secretaries of legation, American millionaires, bridal couples from New Zealand, and last, but certainly not least, Hong Kong officers. These last were a source of unfailing delight to Mr. Fortescue. They were all on sick leave, they said, as he feasted his eyes upon their erect carriage and general air of superabundant health and vitality. His father's connection with the army made a bond of interest to start with, but as he seemed never weary of listening to their mess talk Mr. Mortimer grew absolutely jealous. 'If it was somebody clever now,' he grumbled, 'but I've listened to those fellows, and half the time it is just about nothing at all they talk.'

'That's just it,' cried Claude Fortescue. 'Think of having done with great questions, for a time at least! These fellows haven't an opinion about opium, coolie traffic, the origin of the Chinese language, the future of the Chinese race. They know they could thrash them all to bits if it came to fighting, and that is all they care about. They execrate Lord Wolseley for thinking the Chinese could ever be an ally worth thinking about in time of war, and they are perfectly right. Thank Heaven, there's not a subaltern in the British Army that has ever seen a Chinese soldier and doesn't know better than that. They smoke excellent cigars, speak English like gentlemen, look well set-up in their little cut-away morning coats, and superlative in *kimonos*, as they go to and from their baths. Why, Gem, could anything possibly be more refreshing to a man who has almost gone out of his mind thinking over every question in heaven and earth, shut up alone like a hen in a hencoop in the midst of a whole large city full, no man of

whom ever held himself upright, or was innocent of skin disease ?'

Mr. Mortimer laughed. It was the first time his friend had ever spoken of having nearly gone out of his mind. He supposed he was *through* now. 'If only the Government wouldn't send him to one of those beastly holes again. If the British minister would only think ! But I believe it is all arranged by those Government office fellows at home. A conceited set of coxcombs ! Isn't my cousin, Teddy Mortimer, one of them ? And the most conceited of the whole lot, I dare say.'

From which it may be seen that Mr. Mortimer was not quite *through* yet, when Mrs. G. J. Smith, and Mrs. Robinson, and their two little girls appeared upon the scene, acting as if they were the very dearest friends, and each mothering the other's poor neglected child. It seemed Nelly Robinson had sickened, and also Mrs. Smith. So they had found themselves leaving Hankow by the same steamer, and had both flirted against each other with their successive captains ever since. Naturally they had a good many interests in common, and they both wanted to go to Miyanoshta, so they arrived there as great friends. It was about 1,800 miles they had had to travel to arrive at this, the cheapest change of air attainable from Hankow. But people get broken in to great distances in the East by having, in the first instance, had to get there. They said the thermometer had stood over 100° Fahrenheit for a week before they left Hankow, and all four had white faces and greenish rings under their eyes. They were carried up to Miyanoshta in white muslin dresses and *kagos*, that most uncomfortable national mode of transport, and they lay out in long chairs on arrival, and 'lay off' regularly, as they expressed it, after tiffin, and seemed hardly able to move one foot after the other on arrival. The wonder was how they had got there at all, and especially how they all got themselves so becomingly dressed. In their train appeared two tea-tasters, in suits of grey pongee silk, with white shoes and pink striped stockings, grey Teraï hats, with pink and white puggarees twisted round them, and each a sprig of pink crepe myrtle in his button-hole. These two very elegant young men also were carried up in *kagos*, and 'lay off' and 'lay out.' They both looked also as if they had tasted too much tea. But they were very particular over their afternoon tea now, and so were the ladies. They each had their own tea and their own Canton teapot in its basket case, and they had it served to them by the pig-

tailed, long-gowned China boy of one of the party, refusing to allow the little Japanese *mousmé* to do more than bring the cakes, and apparently making their afternoon tea the great meal of the day. But before the Hong Kong officers had quite made up their minds as to whether they were men or stuffed figures, they had themselves carried away again to Yokohama, and so off to British Columbia, proceeding home by the new Canadian Pacific route, and doing the distance to London in the quickest time in which it had yet been accomplished. They had got to be out in China again by next tea season, and to re-establish their health first, so they had no time to lose, as everyone admitted.

But then arrived a Singapore contingent, looking sicklier and more leaden-eyed than anyone. They had had to come over 3,000 miles to get a breath of fresh air. And after all it seemed they were not to get it, for the number of hot springs at Miyanoshita made the air feel like the steam of many kettles, and it was very hot and heavy. Each day it seemed more impossible to scale the treeless mountain opposite, with its long sloping back, and tall cutting Japanese grass, on which no creature ever browses, or even to wander up through the pine woods to the view points, where women sold cups of tea, and kept curious beasts and pretty Japanese marvels always on view ; also Fujiyama in the distance, if the mist allowed. But Mr. Mortimer said he would not move on till he could climb Fuji itself. In reality it amused him to chat to the people coming and going from the four corners of the earth, in especial the people just out from the London season, with garments of such new and even unheard-of cuts and colours, and equally antiquated European ideas. And he felt certain that this sort of amusement was the best possible for Mr. Fortescue. They were sure also of good food where they were. To men who have run down on insufficient diet day after day for months up country in China, a good dinner every day is a serious matter, not lightly to be parted from.

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## CHAPTER XVII

## STRUGGLING WITH THE RAPIDS

A wave came over the deck,  
As big as a wave could be,  
And it took away the captain, and the mate, and a man,  
It had got the 'one, two, three!'

LELAND.

TRAVELLING through the Yangtsze gorges in May is sometimes a floral feast, an andante in rocks and rapids, precipices and mountains, with a deep contra basso of water surging, swelling, even at times roaring through it all. But it may very easily be more like one of Wagner's operas, crushing, crashing, soul-absorbing, and apparently intending to go on for ever. Swollen by the summer rains, that come down like the dragons of the mountains, the Chinese believe them to be caused by scoring, gashing, rending the mountain sides, not uncommonly carrying away some part of the mountain tops, and strewing the two or three miles wide river bed below with huge boulders, as the seashore is strewn with sand; swollen by these rains, that have already caused hundreds of minor tributary streams to break their banks, and carrying off bridges and cattle to flood the country round, the Yangtsze is apt to rise somewhat suddenly over a hundred feet in some parts, in years of flood even more than this. It may therefore be imagined that when a freshet occurs, no boat that ever was built could stand against the vast volume of water coming down unexpectedly; and when a certain rock is covered at the head of the gorges, the city authorities of Kwei Fu, the city that commands the beautiful end gorge, permit no boat or tug to go down stream into the already water-choked gorges, although the lifeboats there as elsewhere on the Upper Yangtsze are the best organised service in China, and year in year out the means of saving innumerable lives. So early as May these freshets may occur, although they are, so to say, due later on, and the three boats toilsomely making their way to Chung-king found the river as it was one continuous series of fierce rapids. They had no sooner strained every nerve and bamboo rope to get up one, than they were confronted by another. The great hawser, that took so long to coil and uncoil and pay out, was for ever being called into requisition. The men at the bow-sweep, one of the most responsible places in the boat,

were continually being changed ; none seemed to satisfy the junk owners, one of whom had already lost his voice through continuous shouting. There are many disadvantages about travelling in kwadzes, although they are the only boats with any attempt at comfort or privacy that travel upon the Yangtze, and therefore really the only possible ones where ladies are travelling. But no other boat will help a kwadze. It is an unwritten law of the river. For in them travel all the high mandarins, and mandarins, as everyone knows, are difficult people to deal with. They don't pay for assistance, and if their things get spoilt at a rapid they may insist that those who had been helping them should replace them. In short, whatever went wrong it would be always the other parties who would be to blame, and have to make things good, never the officials' own boat. Besides, they claim the right to go first at rapids, and after you have been waiting in a serried jamb of boats for four or five days perhaps to get your boat's turn to be tugged and hauled up, it is at least trying to see a boat with an official flag come up at the last moment and take precedence, and perhaps even lose your own place in the line to make way for her. That waiting at the rapids with every boat grinding against every other, and carrying away here a mat, there a flower-pot, everyone shrieking at once, is always anyhow a sufficient trial of temper and exercise in bad language. And to help one of those objectionable, top-heavy kwadzes—that come to grief, too, oftener than any boat on the river, because they have been so long laid up waiting for a job, they are sure to be ill found in some way, and are always top-heavy—to help a kwadze would put a cargo junk out of court, and deprive it of any chance of that assistance of which it may stand so much in need too, to get its own goods up to Chungking without spoiling. However, being three, the kwadzes managed pretty well, being always able to muster between thirty and forty men at each rapid from themselves ; and then one wrangle as to the amount to be paid to the hundred or so extra men and boys from the shore sufficed for the three boats, and had not to be repeated in each case. In an ordinary way each boat was towed by eleven men, two others walking behind them at different distances to disengage the towline from the various rocks on which it caught, or by swimming to carry it round an impossible point, and secure it on the other side, so that the boat might then haul up to it. It is the work of these two men that is probably the most

dangerous, requiring also great nerve and promptitude, for without a moment's hesitation they have to scale a sharp rock and save the towline from being cut by its jagged edges, and then, themselves in a most dangerous position, shake the heavy towline with the weight of the boat drawing it taut till they get it free, then clamber down at the peril of their lives, and so on and so on, often for hours with barely an intermission, in danger all the time. Five or six men remained upon each boat to work the gigantic bow-sweep, which serves as an additional rudder, as also to fend the boat off the rocks, or help to get it along with bamboo poles and beathooks, in the use of which they are marvellously skilful. These men also work the sail, and one of them cooks the food for the boat's company, which is always cooking, always smoking, always smelling, except just at the short intervals when it is being shovelled down the throat by means of chop sticks. The cook's therefore is a most important and leading rôle, and he seems generally to be an energetic man, and the wit of the company. There are besides two men at the helm behind, who are a constant quantity, and who, though most important, work unseen by the passengers, as they stand behind raised up high, that they may see over the roof of the cabins. The task of the trackers, who tow the boat, is rather one of brute strength than anything else, though they also have to be under discipline in a fashion unexampled elsewhere in China, obeying orders given by the drum as to pulling, not pulling, pulling with might and main, as also not only every now and then, but often to venture over rocks where few Europeans would care to follow them ; this, too, harnessed to the towline by a loop over one shoulder. This loop and harnessing is one of the most practically simple contrivances, being capable of being slipped off with the greatest possible ease, except when the weight of the boat is depending upon it. All over China a longing 'to undo the heavy burdens' is apt to torment the new-comer, and the spectacle of so much struggling humanity, struggling too at such awful odds, as it would appear, with rocks and river, is apt to tell upon the nerves of all travellers. But Mrs. Betterton, who herself rather liked the sense of contest, was shocked and grieved to see how completely it appeared to exhaust Lilian. The girl could not grow whiter than she had now been for some days past, but she ate less and less. She taught Susanna and little Mark each day, but she never played with them now, as she had been used to do ; but



sat with a Chinese book in her hand, avoiding looking out, and shrinking from meeting anyone's eye.

Dr. Maxwell recommended exercise, so as far as possible they got up each morning and went ashore before the boat started ; walking as best they could alongside or ahead of the boat till seven, when it was too hot again to go on shore till six in the evening. After which it was so soon dark not much walking was possible. But it was the hours from twelve to four that were the hardest to spend. And when the shouting was very violent they all got their nerves somewhat strained, which unkind people say is a China euphemism for tempers being rather short. One day one of the men at the bow-sweep slipped in his efforts, and fell over into the large pan of boiling rice just ready for the men's dinner. He sprang up again, and pushed and shoved with the best of them for another minute, then began to tear off his clothes, and moan, and beat the deck with his forehead. He was all one gigantic scald, neck and arm and back. Dr. Maxwell was sent for as quickly as possible, but it was Lilian who knelt in the burning sun, and poured oil and bound cotton wool round the wounded man. She was doing it all whilst Miss Alger was still screaming, and before Miss Frost had realised what had happened.

But next morning there was a worse accident. A new man had taken command at the bow-sweep ; he had only come on board the night before, so that they none of them knew anything about him, except that he must be a thrifty man and have saved up a little money, for he brought two bales of merchandise with him, that he wanted to convey up to Chungking. He had a large wen on his forehead, that made them recognise him at once, and gave him a sort of dignity. Just as they were starting the next morning—accidents seemed generally to occur at first starting, when possibly the men were not yet fully awake—the boat seemed going against the rocks, and the new bow-sweep sprang ashore, and worked with a will to save the trackers from giving way, and being drawn back into the river. He was doing a work of supercrogation, for his duties lay upon the deck, but possibly he saved their lives, for the heavy house-boat so nearly fell over on its side in the whirlpool that was sucking at the rope, that even their beds fell over this time, and everything alike, that was not already on the floor, fell there in a confused heap. Then there was a cry of a man

in the water, and all attention was concentrated upon him. A lifeboat near at hand saved him, and he appeared none the worse. But whilst they were staring at his dripping figure, from the other side the poor bow-sweep was being helped on board by two men, one on either side. He had been dragged over and dashed against a rock. He did not seem in very great pain, he did not complain or cry out, only just moaned a little as they supported him along to the back of the boat, where the captain and the captain's wife lived. Then he lay down and moaned a little all that day and part of the next day. From the first he would not eat. The men were very gentle with him, brought him messes they had prepared, and rigged up a little protection for him from the sun. But since he would not eat, they had no hope for him, and next day they carried him ashore, and rigged up a little shelter with a mat over it, and the captain came round asking for contributions for a coffin. He had no wife nor child, they were told; all they could do for him now was to buy him a coffin, to which the Chinese attach so much importance, and on the next morning, when they got up, there was the poor man shut down in it, the mat on which he had lain lying empty on the shore. The drum, to which he had so often worked, was beaten by his brother trackers for his requiem, the customary letter written to Feng Tu—where, according to Chinese belief, resides the Emperor of the Dead, as the Emperor of the Living at Peking—then burnt by way of despatch. Some guns were fired, and then the coffin was carried away to where it commanded a magnificent view of the next gorge and the down-coming river. The aspect was excellent, his brother trackers said, and they came away well satisfied that his grave was so happily situated. The pomegranate trees were covered with ripe red coral flowers, and Miss Pearce wanted to lay some on his grave. But Mrs. Betterton told her the Chinese would not like this, it was not according to usage; she might let off crackers if she wanted to do something more for the poor man. But letting off crackers was not in accordance with Miss Pearce's feelings, who contended that the man had died a true hero, doing more than he was called upon to do—and to save their lives.

'The Chinese say it was to save his two bales of merchandise. He was so uneasy about their getting wet,' said Mr. Jenkins from the depths of the most comfortable arm-chair. Another man was engaged for the bow-sweep, and

they went on into a sort of beautiful dreamland past the exquisite east gate of the Door Leaf Gorge, as the Chinese call the beginning of the long twenty miles of the Witches' Gorge. But none of them smiled now, as they looked out on the exquisite scenery, and watched the trackers scrambling like goats round a bad corner. A melancholy company they journeyed on, doggedly studying Chinese, and only speaking to one another to ask a question, or to correct one another's pronunciation.

The first relief they experienced was when they arrived at the frontier of the great Province of Szechuan, and came upon the new road that unfortunately terminates abruptly there. In all the Province of Hupeh through which they had so far travelled there are no roads, except in the English concession at Hankow, those that had been made in the old days of Chinese Emperors, before the Mantchus conquered China, having been dug up by the agriculturists to grow a few more grains of rice, a few more heads of Indian corn. For every man is free to do what he likes in China, and it is no man's duty to protect the general good except the censors, and they are so few and so far away. When it was arranged that the two provinces should combine and make a road through these gorges, where there is always much loss of life, and where at certain seasons now all passage is impracticable, the Province of Szechuan at once set to work and completed its portion of the road, but owing to alleged want of funds the Province of Hupeh has not even begun its road yet. Possibly the engineering difficulties are beyond Chinese skill. Anyhow, they all had a feeling of being once more cared for when they saw a road again, and actually walked a little way along it, no longer struggling over rugged rocks, and concentrating all their faculties upon their feet. They seemed no longer so alone in the world.

They were walking along this new Szechuan road, through the Gorge of the Fearsome Pool, on the day of Miss Neligan's wedding; that is, Dr. Maxwell and Mr. Jenkins were walking with Miss Frost, Miss Alger, and Lilian. Mrs. Betterton was afraid for the children, who might so easily fall over the precipices in this the most precipitous of all the gorges, where the Chinese used to say not even a monkey can find a foothold nor a bird a resting place, and where the road is cut out of the living rock with a roof of rock overhead at times, while at others it skirts along the

face of the cliff. It was sometimes about five feet wide, but the precipices were so appalling that they walked in single file along the inside edge, pausing every now and then to watch the trackers in front and make sure they were themselves quite clear of the towline. Miss Frost, indeed, said she could not look at the trackers, it made her so nervous, and she walked last. At times she even refused to look at the view.

'The courage and devotion to duty of these poor men is very remarkable,' said Dr. Maxwell. 'I hope when our hour comes we may all be as self-sacrificing as that poor fellow whom we buried. Just look now at that man who disengages the rope! Never a moment's hesitation, as he swings himself over the edge, or as now at this corner shaking the towline with all his might! How would you like, Jenkins, to stoop over the edge there, and use such violent movements as he is doing?'

Mr. Jenkins would not like it at all, he said, but he supposed the man was brought up to it.

'I hope they will not fall,' said Miss Alger, pausing and staring at the trackers, who were now slowly giving way inch by inch across the road, as the violence of the stream tugged at the boat beyond their powers of resistance. 'I wish they would take those shoulder straps off.'

'They could not pull here sufficiently with only their hands,' said Dr. Maxwell gently. 'See how firmly their feet are planted. I think they know what they are about. Ah! I am glad of that—the men from the first boat are running back to help to haul ours round that point.'

Between them they got the boat round that turn of the road safely.

'I never know what you mean by talking about the Chinese courage and all that,' said Mr. Jenkins. 'These men don't really pull. They are afraid to. Have you watched them rowing? I have not the patience, it is so ridiculous. And have you ever seen one catch a rope yet? Why, they turn away, and hide their faces, just as a woman would. Then the way they throw too! Oh, they are all a set of women rather than men.'

Dr. Maxwell happened to glance round, and as he did so he saw Lilian, as Miss Pearce had said when the Chinese were severely handled, *shrivelling up*. Half amused, he suffered his eyes to linger on her face, and as he did so saw her face begin to change, and changing—changing till its expression

of absolute horror almost petrified him. She neither spoke nor moved. But he saw it all in her wide-opened eyes. And when he turned round it was no surprise to him to see that at the next corner of the road the men had given way. They were trying to disengage themselves from the towline now. Too late ! too late ! It had been so imperceptible at first, but they were going with a run now. Evidently the boat must have been caught by one of those sudden geysers that rise up unexpectedly in mid-Yangtsze like a water spout, creating a new whirlpool for the moment. Whatever it was, there was the boat below turning, and worse ! Over now ! Four of them in a confused knot ! The fifth caught with his hands at the edge of the cliff, then was jerked and flung down after the others. The sixth just saved himself, lying sprawling on the road ; the rest, by giving way a little, going back with the boat, then tugging with might and main seemed getting the boat out of the whirlpool, when the towline gave and they were all thrown forward on their faces against the cliff.

Dr. Maxwell bounded forward to their assistance. There were bad cuts and bruises, but nothing of very great consequence. He went back to the other man, who was lying at full length when the towline broke. He had picked himself up, and was apparently all right, only dazed and possibly strained. Then he looked back. There was Lilian Grey kneeling by the edge of the cliff, holding on with her hands, but stooping over, looking down below. 'One of them moves, I think,' she said, as he came near, but speaking very low, and without moving herself.

'I am afraid it is nothing,' said the Doctor, speaking very low too, as he looked over on to the jagged rocks below, that looked as if they would cut like knives. 'I do not see how it is possible. Had you not better go back to the other ladies, my dear young lady ? I see Mr. Jenkins has taken them away.'

'Are you going down ? Or will you have them fetched up ?' asked Lilian, as if she either did not hear or did not understand, and still stooping stared down below.

'But how ? I cannot fly,' said the Doctor.

'The broken towline—under the armpits. These men could let you down.'

'Quite so. You are right,' said Dr. Maxwell, and immediately began adjusting his handkerchief under one arm. Lilian gave him hers. She loosened the skirt of her little soft white dress, and taking it off gave it to him.

'You may want bandages,' she said.

None of the Chinese spoke. They had often noticed that before. In great emergencies these men, generally so loquacious, would not say a word. But they saw now what the Doctor was intending to do, and they would not hear of his going down without one of themselves going down first to be ready to help him. He might not be able to scramble among the rocks, they said, 'it was not good going.' They also tested the towline a little first, and cast a glance at the now distant houseboat. Then all but a few of them set off at a run. 'Poor Mrs. Betterton! it is her boat. And the children! They would have been safer up here. I only hope they aren't all giddy with so much turning round.' He spoke with forced cheeriness.

'Is there any danger—for them, I mean?' asked Lilian hoarsely.

'Are we not all in danger all the while?' asked Dr. Maxwell soothingly, as he intended. 'But there is One Who guards.'

'You know what I mean,' said Lilian almost fiercely. 'God did not guard these men. He let them die. Will He let Mrs. Betterton die too?'

'I do not know enough to say,' said the Doctor gravely. 'But there is nothing I can do for her,' and he let himself be lowered over the precipice.

When he came up again he found Lilian still sitting almost where he had left her. She stood up and came forward. 'It is all over,' said the Doctor, in answer to the question in her face.

'What! all five!' and her face quivered all over.

He bowed his head. Then he put his arm round her to lead her away, and Lilian broke down completely, and leaning her forehead on his shoulder cried as if her heart were broken.

'There, there,' said he after a few moments, during which he had let her cry on, knowing this was the best thing for her. 'We must think of other people now. Those men are dead. Their troubles at least are over.'

'Oh! if mine only were!' sobbed the girl.

'My dear Miss Grey, have you any troubles? Let me help you to bear any you have.'

'You cannot! Nobody can!' cried Lilian. Then 'Oh, Dr. Maxwell, what must you think of me?' as with a rush of shame she suddenly realised whose arm was round her, whom she was talking to.

'Why, that you would be a very inhuman young lady if you were not upset out of your natural self by what you have just seen,' said the Doctor smiling. 'I hope you will not think the worse of me if I confess I am myself. And I have walked the hospitals, remember. But now what I can't think is what we are to do next. Have Mr. Jenkins and the other two ladies disappeared altogether? It would be of no use trying to get you to your boat, for that has gone down stream so fast we could never reach it. And it is darkening in so already. I don't quite know how we are to get down to the river anyhow. Of course here it is impossible.'

'Do you not think we had better walk on quickly?' asked Lillian. 'We must get to a pathway down soon, I think. And we might take one of the other boats down stream again, if—if they want a boat,' her voice trembled. 'But first I must see where Miss Frost and Miss Alger are. I had quite forgotten all about them.'

They found them in a few minutes now, Miss Alger just recovering from a second and more violent fit of hysterics. She was putting the best constraint she could on herself however. And Mr. Jenkins now undertook to see the three ladies to the boats they knew to be safe, if Dr. Maxwell would go back and see about the other. 'I would go myself,' he said, 'but somebody must stay with these ladies. And at the worst a doctor would be of more use. I can't see that that boat has pulled up anywhere,' he added in a lower voice. 'It can't have gone to pieces, can it?'

'I don't know,' said Dr. Maxwell hurriedly.

In the end Mr. Jenkins had as much as he could do to get his party down to the boats, and safely on board of them in the fast waning light. But there great comfort awaited them, for the men on the boat had heard that though the other boat had gone against the rocks, and sprung a leak, she had not gone to pieces. Then only they confessed to one another how much they had been fearing, and went upon their knees and thanked God. Only Lillian choked with sobs, as she thought of those five trackers lying dead on the rocks all night. She had seen the expression with which the last man looked back, as he too was dragged over, and it haunted her. It would haunt her all her life, for as he went over the cliff he had recalled Claude Fortescue to her, looking as he had looked when he stood at the corner of the Niukan, almost holding out his hands to her, yet not calling her back. They

made up a bed for her in one of the boats, and she fell asleep, but only to wake up again and again, confronted by that 'daring last look of despairing.' Miss Frost was almost as much upset, but she spent the night upon her knees. It was too late for those men who were dead, but she was praying God might give her grace to learn Chinese quickly, and to speak words of power to those who still survived, sunk in ignorance and sin. Miss Frost always fell asleep now with her Chinese lesson in her hand, and would often wake in the night and study. She had to study day and night, for she had a message to give the Chinese, and she could not rest till it was given. She did not require to understand their answers, only to speak herself. But that also is difficult in Chinese.

Next day all the cargo had to be taken out of Mrs. Betterton's boat, and everything taken to pieces for the leak to be repaired. There was no house near, so she and the children spent the day among the rocks, Susanna playing at being a band of robbers, and little Mark equally pleased to be robbed, till the sun got too high, and no rock could give them shade any longer, and his head began to ache. Just then the coffins arrived for the unburied men. Mrs. Betterton had them laid across the rocks, and there during the heat of the day she and her children sat in the shadow of the coffins, as the only place of shelter she could find for them. She was glad then that Lilian was not with her. Susanna and Mark were too young to feel it, and Mrs. Betterton flattered herself her faith was too firmly fixed to regard any such thing as an omen; but it brought back the thought of her dead husband more present than ever during the day, and once in an agony of anxiety she seized little Mark and pressed him to her beating heart, frightening the child by her convulsive grasp. In the end the boatmen got excited, said the bodies were remaining too long unburied, and that the living must, as usual in China, give place to the dead, who threaten to absorb the whole country by their graves. Round every city in China they absorb the largest area, lying beside its usually shrunken limits as silent witnesses to the decay of that empire they helped to make so great.

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## CHAPTER XVIII

## MORE JAPANESE BATHING

'The hero of the story was a near relative of my own, a fine little fellow of some eight years. His mother reprehended him, saying, "I do not like to hear you speak in that manner. You mean to be funny, but you are simply rude." "There, mother, you have *the secret of my life*," said he, bursting into tears; "I am always meaning to be funny, and I turn out rude."—T. A. TROLLOPE.

BUT to return to pretty Miyanoshita with its dancing cascades and views of Fujiyama, its laughing Japanese and ladies in white muslin. 'I say, Stuckey, ar'n't you Acting Commissioner at Wuhu?' cried one of those irrepressible Hong Kong officers, just returned from an expedition to Yokohama with a fresh consignment of properly got-up shirts.

'Not acting exactly at this moment,' said Mr. Stuckey, in white flannels and white tennis shoes, looking up from a game of go-bang with an American heiress.

'Well, clear out of this, then. Let me play go-bang with young ladies. Look at these telegrams,' and he handed him a newspaper. 'Oh, it is nothing but another riot. Consul and his wife only got out of the back door of the Consulate disguised as Chinamen. Commissioner saved the Customs, drove the Chinese six times down the street at the point of the bayonet.'

'That's Ruffewood, an American. Plucky fellow!' murmured Mr. Stuckey.

'But do you mean that the English Consul and his wife disguised themselves—as Chinese?' asked Mr. Mortimer, no longer lounging in a long chair, but looking rather like spoiling for a fight with somebody.

'Put on *Chinese* clothes!' ejaculated Mrs. G. J. Smith.

'Had the Consul no flag to defend?' asked the American girl. 'I'd have wrapped the Stars and Stripes round me and fronted them.'

'I can't make it out,' said Mr. Stuckey, musingly. 'He's a good fellow. Of course he'd his wife. But it will do harm. It must certainly do harm. We are only tolerated in China by reason of our prestige. If we once lose that it will come to fighting.'

'Just so,' said the Hong Kong officers. 'That's what a

nation has an army for, to save fighting. As long as people hold up their heads, and are known to be ready, nobody attacks them. But once lose your reputation, and it comes to a mere question of brute force and guns. Isn't that what you say, Fortescue ?'

'I remember when Wenchow was threatened old Smithers went with his uniform asking all the ladies to rub it up. He'd got to receive the rioters, he said, and tarnished lace wouldn't do. I don't know about a consul wrapping himself in his flag, though rather that than leave it behind. But I don't believe there is a Chinaman living who'd dare lay his hand upon a consul in full consular dress. That's what I always take mine about with me for.'

'Dear me, Mr. Fortescue, you must look very terrible in it, I suppose. Have you got it here ? Do put it on for us to see,' laughed the American girl.

'It is a mild, inoffensive dress enough,' said Claude Fortescue gently, 'a cross between an admiral and a flunkey. The cocked hat, the admiral's part of it, I specially cling to. But it would take more than that, I expect, to awe the soul of a Western American, who has been brought up, as far as I know, to reverence neither God nor man, nor even to feel the deep significance there is in clothes. Now that the meanest coolie in China at least understands. Indeed, he has been taught to respect everything but woman. That is the one important omission in his education.'

'And a most important omission, too. Do you know, Mr. Fortescue, I sometimes think it has been left out of yours,' said the girl, leaning her head firmly against the back of her chair, and looking at him, 'or that you've caught it from being so long in China. For it is a pretty heavy indictment you bring against me or my country.'

They were all bent on winning attention from him, because he showed them none—Mrs. G. J. Smith, Mrs. Robinson, and now this American girl. Mr. Stuckey, Mr. Mortimer, and the ever-varying members of the Hong Kong garrison were all very well in their way, the last the least so, because they never stayed long at the hot springs, but went off on shooting expeditions, or to the Northern Island, or up Fujiyama. But just because the others paid them attentions and he did not, every woman there was bent on attracting that very interesting-looking Mr. Fortescue, as they called him.

'You must not be too hard on Fortescue,' said Mr.

Mortimer. 'He has never been in America, so can't be said to know what women are like properly, and has never even learned how to flirt.'

'Never learned how to flirt? Do you English take lessons in it? I always thought it came by nature;' on which everyone laughed, and to cover her confusion she added, even more saucily than usual, 'I should dearly love to take a course.'

'So should I,' said Mr. Stuckey, settling himself comfortably as for the purpose.

'Only married ladies flirt in Europe, I have been told,' said the young Westerner.

'Only married ladies flirt in China,' replied Mr. Stuckey.

'I'm sure their flirtations are most innocent and innocuous,' chimed in Mrs. Robinson in her deeply sympathetic tones.

'Not Mrs. G. J. Smith's. Surely not Mrs. G. J. Smith's,' urged Mr. Mortimer.

'Oh, Mrs. G. J. Smith is perfectly transparent and above board,' said Mrs. Robinson, with a little toss of the head. 'There never can be the slightest mistake as to whom she is amusing herself with. And women must amuse themselves somehow. I think you gentlemen are very hard on the *young* married women.' This with a great stress upon the *young*, as if leaving herself quite out of the number. 'They come out here with their high animal spirits and their charm of manner. Their husbands are too busy to attend to them. And then every man they play tennis with, or walk or ride with, they are accused of flirting with. Would you have poor dear little Mrs. Smith walk out alone among the Chinese, or sit at home studying conic sections?'

'I never yet have been able to find out why Mr. Smith's office hours are so much longer than any other man's,' said Claude Fortescue very seriously. 'I mean, of course, the married men's generally.'

'You forget he is in business. You gentlemen at the Consulate are *sometimes* supposed not to have quite enough to occupy you. And the Customs regularly leave off at four.'

'Then it is among the consular and Customs officials we must look for the Lotharios, I suppose? The business men—good, honest fellows—only marry wives for other men to—flirt with.'

'Say rather it is the duty of the Consulate and Customs—when they are not married—to cheer the lonely hours of the other men's wives,' said Mrs. Robinson, suavely. 'Put in that

way it sounds quite different, does it not? But talking of flirting, I had quite forgotten what it was like till I saw a young girl flirt the other day. At the way she carried on I held up hands of righteous horror. We all did in Hankow.'

'Who was it?' asked Mr. Stuckey, 'to thus astonish Hankow?' and he waved his hands as if to signify this meant much.

'A certain Miss Grey, said to be an heiress—only I don't believe it—travelling with a party of missionaries. She completely turned Dr. Berner's head. Indeed, there was not a man in the place she did not try her hand on. My belief is her aunt was carrying her off into the wilds because she wasn't fit to be trusted. I hear she has been kissing some missionary doctor up there, and creating no end of a scandal.'

'Oh my!' cried the American girl. 'That go-bang board positively jumped off my knee. Truly it did. I must leave you gentlemen to pick up the pieces. It is time for my before-dinner bath,' and so saying she tripped away. 'I felt there were tornadoes coming,' she said afterwards. 'Whatever did you do that for, Mrs. Robinson? Did you not feel that every man of them was in love with her directly you mentioned her name?'

'Yes; but I knew it before. And they cannot be in love with us while that continues.'

'Oh! that's it, is it? Only I wouldn't meet Mr. Fortescue in a lonely path just now, if I were you.'

'I will walk with him along a lonely path before the week is out,' said Mrs. Robinson. 'I know men. They don't like it at first. Then they want to hear more. At last they don't care. Then they are ripe for some one else.'

'Well! you have made a study of them.'

'What else should I study? Depend upon it, "The proper study of mankind is man," and it is the only subject men forgive a woman for studying. I intend to appropriate Mr. Fortescue. So do you. So does Mrs. Smith.'

'Oh! I—I am sure I don't care. You are welcome to him for me.'

'That's one out of the field, then, and the only dangerous one. As to Mamie Smith, I can easily distance her; and that girl up the Yangtze is too far away already. Distance is a great disillusioner—to *men*! And I mean Mr. Fortescue to fetch and carry for me before the week is out. He is the cleverest man here, and I like clever men. Any

other woman is welcome to the fools. Now to astonish him by some out-of-the-way bit of knowledge ! How he must be hating me at this moment ! But that, too, is a point gained. Anything is better than indifference.'

Thus they idled at Miyanoshta, whilst Wuhu smouldered in its ashes.

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## CHAPTER XIX

### ARRIVING AT CHUNGKING

'What tome or treatise can explain  
Thy individuality ?'

'I spring from treaties,' whispered back  
Exterritoriality.'

BUT it is really time to return to Mrs. Betterton, from whom even the shadow of her five coffins was being violently withdrawn. The whole party were not reunited till they met at Kwei Fu, at the head of the last of the great Yangtze gorges, and the rowdiest town upon the river according to repute. So that they none of them went ashore, and even avoided being seen looking out. They had begun to fear there might be difficulty about engaging fresh men, and that the Chinese, who are given to superstition, would believe there was an evil influence about their boats. But the men at Kwei Fu were too well acquainted with the evil influences about their river when a freshet was on to look farther for reasons. And they heard of no difficulty, nor did anyone put any hindrance in the way of their getting some more supplies, which was a great relief to them all. For the chickens they had bought at Ichang had disappointed them by dying of heat apoplexy before they could kill them, and it had been impossible so far to get any fresh vegetables, or to buy anything indeed beyond a few unripe loquats. Now they got sweet potatoes, and chickens, and eggs, and even some mutton, though the cook declared it was goat. They one and all pronounced it mutton, however, and excellent even for mutton, Dr. Maxwell going still farther and saying he had never had an idea before how much he cared for mutton. If the others were not equally outspoken, yet between them they finished everything that was set before them that day. After Kwei

Fu, the great perils of the voyage were over, and though it was tedious enough taking three weeks over the remainder of the voyage, yet their nerves began to have some rest. But it was whilst those five men were struggling on the edge of the precipice, and Mrs. Betterton and her children whirling down stream with a broken towline, that the wedding party at Hankow were drinking their healths with all the honours, and Mrs. FitzHugh got a sudden vision of Lilian's pale face of agony. And, alas! it was when Dr. Maxwell put his arm round her, and Lilian leant her forehead on his shoulder and sobbed, that Miss Alger, who was the head of the three coming on to join them, turned back and gave way to a second fit of hysterics. They had thought nobody saw them but the Chinese, to whom the ways of the foreigner are always so alike outrageous that there is hardly a possibility of more or less so. And the Doctor knew far too much of women's nerves to attach the least importance to the incident, he wished he could. Whilst as to Lilian herself, she never even thought of it again after her first blush of shame. The events of the day had been far too painful to leave her any pain for that. But there had been one most unwilling witness, who perhaps also mis-conceived the situation a little.

'And you have had a grand trip, and enjoyed yourselves immensely? Scenery magnificent, is it not? Glorious rocks, precipices, mountains! You could not wish them bigger, nor more precipitous, could you?' It was Threshie Reid, the Consular Agent, who spoke. They had reached Chungking at last, and he had come down to their boats to call upon them.

'I am afraid we didn't enjoy ourselves particularly,' said Mrs. Betterton after a pause, during which no one else seemed ready to reply.

'What! Not the gorges! Not Wauhsien, the loveliest city on all the river! You visited the Chinese Hades, I hope, saw the bottomless well, which, by the way, is all but choked to the top with the amount of burning paper thrown down it. What! did not climb up the hill at Feng Tu and see the skeleton of Pluto's woman bride sitting beside him in her robes of state? Oh! but you should have. It is a most curious tale—most curious. I enjoyed every day of my voyage, though—walked every bit of the way—and wished it had been longer. And is it not the most luxurious mode of travel possible, taking all one's comforts with one? There

one is with a floating home, an excellent dinner every night, and all one's books and papers round one in the evenings.'

'When did you come up?' asked Mrs. Betterton. Then, when he answered, 'February,' she said, 'Ah! so did I the first time. It is certainly very beautiful then. But I am afraid we have hardly thought about the scenery.'

'Didn't you really now?' said Threshie Reid, in a tone of great concern. 'Ah! and ladies too!' He was a great, broad-shouldered man, with a healthy pink and white face, and brown, bushy whiskers. And he spoke habitually in loud, cheery tones, as if never knowing quite how loud his voice would come out. 'And you are bringing quite a strong reinforcement to the missionary workers here, I understand. Doubling the numbers, are you not? And I hope you think they'll—they'll do well.'

'I hope they will indeed,' said Mrs. Betterton. 'And I think I may say I expect it. Never once has one single member of the party said in my hearing, "What a horrid smell!" and I think that says something for their determination to endure whatever lies before them.'

'It *does* INDEED!' said Threshie Reid. Then after a pause to digest it, 'But perhaps you gave the word? No! then it is truly wonderful. And ladies too! But are there horrid smells in China? I am so determined to look only upon the bright side of things, that I do not even know any longer, any more than I know whether they speak loud or not. I have to take things as I find them. I have not come here to reform them. But of course your position is different. And is this young lady a missionary? Looks rather young. Ah! this is Miss Grey. I thought so. And may I ask, Miss Grey, what is your intention in coming to Chungking? It is not an open port. You are aware of that, I suppose. I do not know how you have had your passport filled up. But perhaps you are aware, ladies, that there was a riot not many years ago here, and there are riots occurring every day, one may say, in different parts of the province against the Roman Catholics. There are some 2,000 Catholic refugees—Chinese, of course—starving in the place now, having had their farms and houses burnt. And two men have been dragged round to the various temples, and on their persisting in their refusal to burn incense they were put to death—were put to death. That was in the country, of course. But I have no power whatever to defend you, you know, if you are attacked. The Consulate is

not even a good place to run away from, and it certainly would not stand a siege. Weren't you very frightened on the way up sometimes?' he asked abruptly of Miss Pearce.

'Very much so,' she replied cheerfully. 'I think we were frightened *all* the way. That is why we are so thankful to have got here.'

'Quite so, quite so,' said the Consul. 'And Chungking is beautifully situated. I know no place to compare with it, unless Wauhsien, and I have travelled about China a good deal. My business here is only to travel, and collect trade statistics; you know that, I suppose? I'm starting again directly the rainy season is over. One peculiarity of the place is, however, one never knows when it is over. It rains here all the year round. Have you heard from the others how they like it? How do you find it suits you, Mr. Wilcocks?'

Mr. Wilcocks said sadly he was tolerable, thank you; had neither dysentery nor fever just then, as if to be without either were wonderful. Mrs. Wilcocks was sorry not to call, but she did not often get out.

'How long is it since she has been outside your house?' roared rather than spoke the irrepressible Mr. Reid.

'I don't remember when Mrs. Wilcocks last went out,' said the other slowly and solemnly. 'She has the school to see after, and the mothers. Her time is fully occupied, and she is often in bed.'

'Yes, often in bed,' said Mr. Reid, looking round at the new-comers to see if they appreciated the full force of that statement.

'I don't know how it is,' continued Mr. Wilcocks still in the same dreary tones, as if all spirit had gone out of him years ago, 'but I think a year here takes more out of you than two years anywhere else in China. Possibly it is the want of air; the city is overcrowded, and the streets very narrow, and as you will see in some parts—in the cotton quarter—they are covered over. The Consul here thinks it is the want of exercise. But we have not time to take any exercise. It takes us half an hour in a chair to the city gate, and half an hour back again. And then there is only a twenty minutes' walk on the walls, or if you go outside among the glades, there are objections to that too. And it so often rains.'

'I was just going to ask,' said Mr. Jenkins, 'have you much weather like this?'



'Like this! No,' said Mr. Wilcocks, looking up as a faint beam of watery sunshine seemed to struggle in through the smoke and darkness outside.

'No, indeed! You ladies have brought us sunshine,' said Threshie Reid gallantly. 'We have not seen the sun for—really how long is it since we have seen the sun, Mr. Wilcocks?'

But again Mr. Wilcocks could not remember, it was so long ago.

'Oh, indeed,' said Mr. Jenkins somewhat discomfited. 'We have been thinking what uncommonly dull, cloudy weather it was. If this is one of your bright days we need not have brought our sun hats.'

'Oh, you'll want them—you'll want them,' said Mr. Wilcocks. 'You'll find you'll want everything you can think of to make the climate more tolerable here.'

'I shall walk—I shall walk in the streets,' said Miss Frost aside to Lilian; but Mr. Reid heard her.

'No, you will not, excuse me,' he said. 'If I, a man, think it necessary every time I go out to take a chair with four bearers, and two *ting chai* to clear the way, do you think it could be safe for you, a woman, to walk? No; you may be strong, but I am considerably stronger than you. And I warn you a Chinese row is a thing better avoided. You've no right here, you know, none at all to reside here. You are outside treaty limits, you know. And it is very good of the Chinese authorities if they suffer you to remain. And that reminds me, Mr. Wilcocks, ladies and gentlemen, I am requested by the Chinese authorities to inform all my nationals that the examinations are just beginning in the adjacent town of Kiang Pei. They therefore beg that you will abstain from going into that city or near it. And, indeed, the less you go about at all till the students are dispersed again the better.'

'Oh, certainly, certainly,' said Mrs. Betterton. 'That is the city where, as I was telling you, some years ago they put the Chinese Christians into sacks and threw them into the river.'

'Then we have really come where we may be martyred,' cried Janie Frost, the light of inward joy illumining her strong Scotch features.

'Not you,' however, said the indomitable Consul. 'You may only have to go down river in a hurry, and cause me and the authorities generally a great deal of trouble. It is the

unhappy Chinese you may persuade to abandon the faith of their fathers, who have a chance, and a good one too, of being martyred. Bear that in mind, if you please. And now I don't know if you ladies will honour me by dining at the Consulate before you are settled on shore. If there is anything I can do for you, or lend you, pray let me know. Mine is a bachelor household, but I think I have got everything—I think I have,' he repeated more doubtfully. 'The Doctor, I hope, will come and stay with me. I am afraid I am hardly in a position to ask ladies to stay.'

Then Mr. Wilcocks said what preparations had been made for them, and what accommodation was ready waiting for them on shore. Mrs. Wilcocks would have come to call, but for not feeling very well. This was a formula often used, owing to Mrs. Wilcocks having no gloves. Since the two pairs she had brought up with her quite new had turned into hard balls covered with white swellings, the poor woman had felt it impossible to go out, for she had not the heart to send for any more to meet a like fate, and yet she had always understood that it was unladylike to go out without gloves. When she learnt that Mrs. Betterton considered it quite too hot to wear gloves, then Mrs. Wilcocks found it possible to call upon her, and her health from that day steadily improved from the conversational point of view.

When Threshie Reid with his loud voice and genial smile, and many offers and promises of good will, had taken himself off in his official chair—again with his four bearers and his two lictors clearing the way—the boat seemed distinctly to become at once smaller, and less sunshiny and friendly. Mrs. Betterton had been on the point of accepting at least for Lilian and herself to dine at the Consulate. But to her surprise Lilian, without even consulting her by a glance, very definitely declined for herself. She was too tired, she said. And the others all said they had done pleasuring now, and must first settle in, and then work. Only Janie Frost, who had certainly made remarkable progress in the language, engaged to address Mrs. Wilcocks' mothers' meeting the very next day. Her heart was hot within her till she could speak her message, and she thought they would understand.

Thus, after all their months of travelling, life in Chungking began at last—began with their all being terrified out of their wits as they were carried in sedan chairs up the steep flights of steps that lead from the river up to the city gates,

all wet with the droppings from many coolies' buckets, and with the chairs at such an incline that at each minute all the way up they feared falling out through the back, and held on desperately to what seemed, however, such frail sides!—began with thrills of emotion, as they realised at night that the city gates were closed, and they were shut in alone, defenceless among at least 300,000 Chinese, and no help nearer than Ichang, a month's journey away, and even there none forthcoming if wanted!—began with wonder over the strange street cries and smells, the streets of stairs, all the new and strange Chinese ways and customs, all soon to become so familiar—began with great delight over the amphitheatre of mountains across the great river as seen from the look-out on their roof!—began with a determination to do everything much better than and quite differently from everyone else!—but began also with a steadily rising thermometer! And day after day the clouds still hung motionless and leaden over the city, founded upon a rock, where no breeze ever brings freshness.

And as the busy weeks passed in a whirl of complications, or what the Italians very aptly call *combinazioni*, Mrs. Betterton only gradually became aware that on one pretext or another Lilian refused every invitation to enter the Chungking Consulate. Yet it could not be from any aversion to Mr. Reid, whom she always received with the same still smile of welcome. And he was constant in his calls, for the rain continued, and he could not get away, or thought he could not. And whether his calls were paid to Miss Grey or not, she it was who always received him, whilst the others often said they were busy and begged to be excused. For Mr. Reid certainly dropped in very often. But when he proposed a picnic or an expedition, Mrs. Betterton one day realised Lilian had always seemed pleased, yet whenever he invited any of the party to come and cheer his loneliness at the Consulate she was always ready with some excuse, till Mrs. Betterton actually found herself taking Susanna and little Mark to luncheon with him, lest the poor man should feel affronted. She wondered why it was. That it had some connection with Claude Fortescue she knew instinctively. But the air was too hot and heavy to try to get to the bottom of things, and Mrs. Betterton had too much on her hands, trying to pick up the pieces of her former work, every one of which was so close knit with her husband's presence she seemed

walking in his footsteps, as she went in and out, and far nearer him in her work than as she knelt beside his grave. That, after all, only held his dead remains, the other was still inspired by his spirit. And several of the Chinese seemed still to hold him in good remembrance, and spoke of him, as indeed he had been, as a saint.

Miss Pearce, Miss Alger, and Miss Frost were now all hard at work at Chinese, each with a separate study of her own and a teacher. The first two spent six hours a day over the language, and could hardly ever be persuaded to go out. As to Miss Frost, she might be said to spend all her time over Chinese, though she never could resist an invitation to a walk outside the city. But even then she read the inscriptions upon the graves, or talked to the passers-by, and learned how one man was carrying silk by road instead of letting it come down by river, to avoid paying duty, and how another was carrying quicksilver.

'Quicksilver is imported,' said Mr. Reid; 'you must have made a mistake.'

'He said water silver. It is almost the same word as ours,' pleaded Miss Frost.

'Yes, that is quite right. But carrying quicksilver into Chungking, I don't understand that.'

That, however, did not interest Miss Frost in the least; all she wanted was practice in the language.

Mrs. Jenkins meanwhile was busy teaching the Chinese to sing hymns and the women to knit socks. 'No Chinese knit except in the North,' she said, 'and then they do it in such a silly way. They begin at the toe. The Chinese do everything the wrong way.' That was always her view and Mr. Jenkins'. All Chinese ways were different from what they had been accustomed to, and were therefore wrong ways. They thus gave themselves a great deal of what seemed unnecessary trouble. Mrs. Jenkins had even started a Chinese Band of Hope; as she told their Chinese evangelist, she wanted to have 'everything all the same England side.' The little Chinese children had not the slightest chance of getting any wine to drink, so they were quite ready to take the pledge, but getting them to sing was certainly a trial to the ear-drums, and none could wonder at Mrs. Jenkins having often headaches. Chinese children have powerful lungs.

Of Mrs. Willcocks no one saw much. When she wasn't in bed she was hard at work. She divided her time between

work and bed, of necessity, poor woman, giving rather the larger share to the latter. But she was determined, if possible, not to go down river and leave her husband alone, and the conditions of life under which she lived were all unhealthy, without considering the climate. Meanwhile the thermometer never went below 80° now, and there never was a breeze. It felt very hot already, but it had not yet even once got up into the nineties.

‘You’ll see it won’t stick there when it does,’ said Threshie Reid cheerily. He was a regular Job’s comforter, telling the most dreadful truths with the most radiant of faces, and always insisting that Miss Grey had seen Chungking now and should be sent away. ‘It is not safe here,’ he said. ‘How should it be? And I want to go away. I can’t go away and leave a girl like that here.’

‘Really you are not responsible,’ said Mrs. Betterton to him at last one day.

‘I feel myself so,’ said he. There was no answering that. And, after all, she was in his consular jurisdiction.

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## CHAPTER XX

### SENT DOWN

Blushin’ for others is the next thing to taking a kickin’ for them.

SAM SLICK.

DR. MAXWELL was not working as hard at Chinese as the ladies; he had his dispensary to arrange, his medicines to make up and label. And patients began coming before he was half ready. He was only too thankful that Miss Grey was willing, nay, eager to assist him. She showed all the enthusiasm of the novice, and he who had been for years a dispensing chemist, before he had studied and gone up for his examinations as a doctor, and passed with honours, was delighted to explain everything he could to her. By degrees he gave her regular instruction, till one day Lilian came to Mrs. Betterton: ‘Cousin Mary, I have made up my mind. It is everyone’s duty to do something.’

‘Certainly,’ said Mrs. Betterton.

‘So I have made up my mind to be a medical missionary. I could do that. I could be a lady doctor.’

But the idea of Lilian as a lady doctor was too much even for Mrs. Betterton. Across the years came a vision of her dainty mother, of her distinguished father in the Diplomatic Service. 'What have you done with our child?' she heard them asking. Yet it would not do to oppose the girl all at once, the delicate curves of her face looked so set. Besides, what objections were there really?

'Have you quite made up your mind?' asked Mrs. Betterton, to gain time.

'Yes—quite,' said Lilian firmly. 'I have been thinking of it for a long, long while. Only I did not know if I had the nerve. But Dr. Maxwell has let me help him. I have seen his patients for a week now. Of course I should get more accustomed by degrees. And it is the only thing I could do. I want, too, please Cousin Mary, to give my money to the mission. I want not to have it any longer—to be more like other people, not always treated as different. And I have thought that there might be enough for a women's hospital and a church; I want there to be enough so that the best kind of people should come out for both, and everything be done in the best way.'

'Money is a help, of course,' said Mrs. Betterton, aghast at the coming about of that which at one time she would have so desired. 'But money is not certain to procure the help of the best people. And one thing is certain, if God has given you money you will not be doing your duty by just passing on the administering of it to some one else. You are responsible for the administration of it yourself. I have hoped—as soon as I see the way clear—to build a church here myself as a memorial of my dear husband. I have set aside a sum of money for the purpose. And whenever the place seems ripe it—but——' She so seldom spoke of her husband now, that she broke down for a moment. 'There is, of course, no reason why you should not give a donation to the mission, if you think that a good way of using your money, or why you should not found a women's hospital here, and be yourself the first lady doctor; but for that you would have to go to some hospital and study. And do you think you could do that, my dear child?'

'Dr. Maxwell said he could quite prepare me,' said Lilian. 'He said he could teach me all it was necessary for me to know. Dr. Maxwell has passed very brilliant examinations,' she pleaded. 'And it is not as if the illnesses the people come

for were very complicated. Already I almost know what to give them.'

'That is not being a doctor,' said Mrs. Betterton.

But Lilian would not hear of going down river to study, and meanwhile Mrs. Jenkins told Mrs. Wilcocks, who in her turn told Mrs. Betterton, that Miss Alger was very much shocked at the way in which Lilian sat alone in his dispensary with Dr. Maxwell, and that she had also seen him embracing her in the Bellows Gorge, and that they supposed things were different for missionaries and for young lady heiresses, but that they really thought it was high time Dr. Maxwell should be told to marry her. All this, as may be supposed, made Mrs. Betterton very angry, and she went straight to Lilian and asked her if the reason she would not leave Chungking was because she was in love with Dr. Maxwell.

'In love with Dr. Maxwell!' Lilian's eyes showed surprise, but the lovely face, that had grown so thin and colourless, gained no colour even now, as she asked, 'How should anyone be in love with Dr. Maxwell?'

'I do not know,' said Mrs. Betterton. 'I dare say somebody is. And I see no reason why you shouldn't be; nor, for the matter of that, why you shouldn't marry him, if you like. He is a good man, and——'

'My dear Cousin Mary, I shall never marry,' said Lilian in so much the same off-hand tone as that in which Claude Fortescue had said the same words, that Mrs. Betterton bit her lip at the recollection. 'But what is it? You are vexed, I see. You do not surely wish that I should marry Dr. Maxwell?'

'No, my dear, not unless you wish it; and I am not vexed with you. But what is the matter with you, Lilian?' Mrs. Betterton looked at her gravely, searchingly—recollected the bright, unconscious girl she had seen at Northampton—looked at the pale, shrinking, sad face now turned away from hers—pondered over this wish to be a doctor, yet the absolute refusal to go down river and study. 'What can I do for you, my child?'

At the tender tone Lilian's face at once flared a guilty red. 'Nothing—nothing!' she said.

Mrs. Betterton paused for a moment or two. 'Then she spoke resolutely and slowly, herself feeling at least all the pain she was inflicting. 'If Mr. Fortescue were still here, would you equally refuse to go to the Consulate?' she asked.

At all risks she must arrive at the truth somehow. Evidently the girl had been very deeply wounded, and to heal that wound she must know what it was.

'If Mr. Fortescue were here he would not ask me,' replied the girl with an expression of such sick agony of pain and suffering that Mrs. Betterton at once came to the conclusion some cruel or thoughtless person had told the girl what she considered the truth about him.

'My poor, *poor* child !' she said, and held her in her arms in one of those intensely passionate embraces that always were a fresh surprise, coming from one usually so self-possessed.

'Cousin Mary,' asked Lilian, gently pushing her from her, and looking her full in the face with her grey eyes, the candid, innocent eyes of a child, yet wearing also the agonised expression of a woman, as she took her courage in her hands, and asked the fatal question on which it seemed to her her whole life depended, 'has Mr. Fortescue ever committed any great sin ?'

Mrs. Betterton was puzzled once more. It seemed that Lilian did not know the truth, that no one had undeceived her as to Claude Fortescue's real character. What could it then be that was making her so sad—had made her so sad almost ever since she left Ichang ? No ! Mrs. Betterton distinctly remembered the change had not come over her till after she had got left behind that day in the Niukan Gorge. But that was not enough to account for it. And all the time the girl's question was ringing in her ears, the girl's eyes searching her face. She must decide quickly what to say. Across the years came back to her the recollection of that conversation in the Consulate, when she had so decidedly got the worst of it, and how she had gone home crying in her chair, and how her own dear husband had looked up and said, 'I would have spared you this pain, my love, and spoken to Fortescue myself ; but you seemed to feel it laid upon you, and I knew if anything could do good it would be the tender pleading of a gentle, womanly heart ;' and how she had felt at once conscience smitten that hers had not been 'tender pleading,' and been growing somewhat tenderer, somewhat different, she hoped, ever since. In those days how firmly she would have answered 'Yes' to Lilian's question, had even pictured herself doing so to some girl whose welfare was comparatively indifferent to her.



And yet now to her darling's child, the young cousin she had loved from the first for her mother's sake, and now loved for her own, she said, after a pause, 'Not according to his own lights, I fancy. According to mine, yes. He has lived a life without God in the world.'

The girl's eyes sank to the ground, as if the strain of waiting for that answer had been too much for her. But it was impossible to tell from her manner whether she was relieved or not. Like Mrs. Betterton, Lilian was puzzled. She had thought here to find a solution of what troubled her. It seemed she was not to do so. But after a moment's pause she looked up again, and asked quickly, 'But nothing especial? Never killed anyone—by mistake? Or taken money? Or anything—by mistake, of course?'

'Never, that I have heard of,' replied Mrs. Betterton firmly. 'Never, I am quite sure.'

'I met him that day,' said Lilian, speaking almost in gasps. 'He got that boat for me. He never offered to come with me, Cousin Mary!' She had turned away, and her eyes were streaming with tears. 'He knew I wished it! He could not help but know I wished it!' and she wrung her hands.

'You met him! That day that you were left behind! In the Niukan Gorge! Oh, Lilian!' and the elder woman put her arms round the young girl, and drew her tenderly towards her.

'He never shook hands with me,' said the girl, sobbing. 'He never seemed glad to see me, or anything. I don't think he even understood when I told him Gardie was dead.'

'From what I have heard of him,' said Mrs. Betterton slowly, 'I think he must have been nearly out of his mind before he left Chungking. I think Mr. Threshie Reid would tell you so, only perhaps he would not like to.'

'Oh, yes,' said Lilian, 'he always says, "My predecessor was mad as a hatter when I came up; that is why I take so many precautions!"' To hear Threshie Reid's light words repeated in the girl's trembling tones was unutterably pathetic. She spoke as if she were so weary, had treasured them up so long, till she could bear them no more, and looked withal such a child in her little white frock, with her eyes wide open, trying to force the tears away. 'But what made him mad, Cousin Mary? He wasn't mad when he went away. And he never wrote. From the first he never wrote—not once.'

'I do not believe that he is mad,' said Mrs. Betterton, speaking very thoughtfully. 'And I do not believe that Mr. Reid really thinks so either. He has a loud voice, and a large way of talking, but he is too good-hearted to say anything about it if he really thought so. But I think you would do well, my dear child, to think of Mr. Fortescue no more. He is one of those men who are—unsatisfactory—unsatisfactory! One sees many of them in China. They would have been all that is charming at home, perhaps, but they have no towline to draw them on. They go round and round, just as our boat did in the whirlpools. Plan out your life for the future without any thought of Claude Fortescue, my child.'

'Yes, Cousin Mary, that is why I want to be a medical missionary. He—he would think it so horrid.'

But this did not satisfy Mrs. Betterton. Besides, she could hear the girl's father and mother pronouncing it 'horrid' too. But she was too wary to oppose the idea directly. 'If you will go down to Shanghai, and—after staying at one of the missions there, and studying at the hospital—decide that that really is your vocation, and can pass the examinations, I shall not have a word to say against it,' she said to Lilian. 'But I cannot have you become a missionary in a sort of hole-and-corner way up here. The world would cry shame upon me.'

'What have we to do with the world?' asked Lilian. She thought herself so entirely out of it at Chungking, she could not bear the idea of facing it all again—the men who had been so kind and pleasant to her on the way up—the talk about Claude Fortescue by the people who knew him slightly—not as she knew him, but who yet were all so much better informed about him—the being distinguished from others everywhere as *not* a missionary, but an heiress. The girl's heart was faint within her at the thought of her heiress-ship, which seemed to her no part of herself, and a thing she had never been prepared for. She could not face it all again unfriended and alone.

Mrs. Betterton, however, persisted.

And now other troubles arose as the thermometer continued to rise. Some rumour of the gossip about them had reached Dr. Maxwell's ears, and he set to work at once to protect the innocent girl against a continuance of it. He ceased to ask her help or offer instruction, and in various

ways made it evident he preferred to have his dispensary to himself. Lilian felt hurt, and besides her occupation was now gone. Chungking is not the place for a person without occupation. She had been to the various guild gardens in the neighbourhood, she had seen the finest guild houses in the city, all dragons and bright gilding and exquisite curves of roof; she had visited the various temples, and personally conducted by the Consul had even attended a service at the mosque, and seen the Mahommedan Chinese, looking like so many China inland missionaries, so clean and so much better set up than Chinese generally, all go down like soldiers at the word of command and touch the ground with their foreheads. She and the children, and sometimes Miss Frost, sometimes Miss Pearce, or one of the others, had gone everywhere escorted by the Consul, protected by the Consul's *ting chai*. But the sights of Chungking are hardly sights for repetition, and the summer was already all but upon them. The river was rising so rapidly, so full of water and running so fast, there was no crossing over to the hills on the opposite side. There was only that one bit of the wall to walk upon, and the groves outside, covering all the very restricted peninsula on which Chungking is situated, surrounded on all sides by the very devious course of its two rivers except for the one half-mile neck of land by which it is connected with the walled city of Fu Tou Kwan and the rest of the continent of China. Lilian had been to Fu Tou Kwan, counted the number of ornamental gateways put up on either side of it to magistrates of irreproachable purity, widows of remarkable virtue. She had lunched in that elegant Love Virtue Pavilion in the garden that belongs to all the outside guilds. The exquisite little pavilion had given her great pleasure, the graves it looked out upon had something majestic about them in their solitude with their sacrificial altars and their cypresses. But the time for going out was very limited now, and though Mr. Reid, now he could not take them for long outings, came daily and spent long hours, and it always fell to her lot to entertain him, yet to a girl of ardent aspirations that was hardly a soul-satisfying occupation. She taught the children; she played with the children; she studied Chinese; but she was conscious all the time that everyone—everyone wished her away. Miss Alger, though she did not know it, was determined Lilian should leave Chungking. She had from the first moment of meeting him been attracted by Dr. Maxwell, and whilst Lilian had been engrossed by others

it was to her the Doctor had talked. She was the originator of all the gossip, which went round and round gathering moss as it rolled in the way peculiar to gossip. But all that Miss Alger ever said with reference to Miss Grey's leaving Chungking was that it was a shame to keep a young girl in such a place. To this Miss Pearce agreed heartily; Mr. and Mrs. Jenkins more languidly—it did not concern them much; by the time it got to Mr. Wilcocks it assumed the form of a Christian duty to send Miss Grey away. And it was in this light it was at once presented to Mrs. Wilcocks, who, herself feeling all her health and strength ebbing away from her under the conditions of Chungking life, thought the girl *might* stay if she were bent on marrying Dr. Maxwell and he on marrying her, but if not let her go—let her go, and escape from a place that was too much even for missionaries and martyrs. The two were inextricably interlocked in Mrs. Wilcocks' mind. She had been an involuntary martyr from the first, for her health could not stand China. And Mr. Threshie Reid was as determined as anyone else. As long as he himself remained in Chungking he was but too thankful that Miss Grey should be there, and the enjoyment of her society was one of the *precautions* he took most regularly against contracting any of the insanity of his predecessor. But his official explorations into the products of the province had already been delayed too long, and he was resolute that Miss Grey should leave Chungking before he did. If the missionaries got killed he could not help it, and he supposed it would be in the execution of their duty. But if he could help it he was determined Miss Grey should not remain to be exposed to the possible furies of a Chinese riot.

'Why do you not like to go down to Shanghai and study?' asked Miss Pearce in a friendly offhand way, after having been primed by the Consul at some length, and with much vigour of illustration.

'I am afraid——'

'Afraid! Afraid of what?'

'Afraid of changing my mind, I think,' said Lilian. But though she laughed at herself as she spoke, Miss Pearce believed that, taken at unawares, she had spoken the truth, and Miss Pearce now became the most determined of all that Lilian should be sent away.

'No one should be forced into being a missionary,' she said. 'Not but that I am perfectly happy in my work, and find no

hardship at all in it so far. But then I am over thirty. And after all I don't know yet if I am doing any good.' She was getting a girls' school together by degrees, working at it very manfully. It every now and then fell all to pieces, and she had to begin over again as it were, but there were great hopes entertained of her girls' school, and they all boasted of it.

'I don't see what's to be done, though,' she said to Mr. Reid on the next occasion she happened to see him. 'Miss Grey can't go down river alone without any escort, even if she can be persuaded to go at all.'

'Good heavens! I never thought of that!' cried Threshie Reid in his great jovial tones. 'Do you think I'd do? Missionaries don't consider the proprieties much, do they? I can't go outside of my own jurisdiction. But there's Mortimer at Ichang. Capital good fellow, Mortimer! Perhaps he might come up and take Miss Grey over.'

'I'm afraid that would hardly do,' laughed Miss Pearce. 'There isn't any Chinese mandarin's wife going down, that she could travel with, is there?'

On this it was Mr. Reid's turn to laugh, and he shouted with merriment. 'You're fresh out from England,' was what he at last contrived to say.

'Then there's the China Inland Mission,' said Miss Pearce. 'They seem to be always travelling about.'

'They come *up*. They don't go *down*,' said Mr. Reid solemnly. 'God knows what becomes of them doubtless.'

The semi-profanity of the last sentence Miss Pearce overlooked, so intent was she. 'The men go down to be ordained sometimes, I know,' said she. 'For we came across two making their way up in a native passenger boat.'

'Just so. They were coming *up*. You never meet them going down. I am sure I don't know how they manage it.'

But at last, as the summer was wearing away, and the rock on which Chungking is built beginning to cool down, by dint of diligent inquiry they heard there was a young lady in Yunnan engaged to be married to a gentleman just settling down at Wauhsien, and who could find an escort as far as Chungking, if only there were anyone there who would go on with her to Ichang, the nearest place where she could get married, and where her betrothed could join her.

'It is perfectly monstrous,' said Mr. Wilcocks, 'that a Presbyterian minister cannot marry them. These people talk of the long journeys we unmarried missionaries make. And

there's gossip about those two who went down together in a boat to get married, and whom the Consul kept waiting an extra three weeks because there was a clerical error in the notice he had in the first instance stuck up at the Consulate. People ought not to be forced to travel a thousand miles to get married, any more than to get buried—one's at least as final as the other,' he went on grumbling.

'Yes, but wouldn't this be an excellent opportunity for Miss Grey to go down river? I could accompany the ladies at least as far as Fuchow—in another boat, of course—to Wauhsien, if they like, and then there the happy man could join them—in another boat, of course; do let us be conventional at least, even if we can't be comfortable up country. And after Ichang it is all plain sailing. I mean there are the steamers.'

Lilian looked from one to the other, and saw no sign of relenting.

'No, it is of no use, Miss Grey,' said Threshie Reid firmly. 'Looking like that won't melt a Chinese heart; so it is no use melting mine. A place that is not even an open port is no place for any foreigner, who has got no business there, and I don't go till I see you gone.' With this dogmatic utterance he took himself off, and left her to think about it.

It was like being sent away in disgrace and against her will; and though many of them said they hoped to see her soon back a full-fledged M.D. they knew very well they never expected to see Lilian Grey in Chungking again, nor was there one who wished to do so, except the children. As for Mrs. Betterton, her farewell, even more than that of the others, was like the Polish exile's, when, as he starts for Siberia, he says to his friends, 'May we never meet again!' meaning, 'May you not be sent to Siberia too!' For she still stuck to it that she had put her hand to the plough, and she could not draw back, but must live and die in Chungking. Her work was prospering under her hands, and she was full of hopes, but she loved the girl dearly, and she could not part from her now without a great wringing of the heart-strings. Besides, what was to become of Lilian now? She was certainly not stronger in health than when she left England, and though Mrs. Betterton had given her most careful letters of recommendation to her various friends in Shanghai, she hoped soon to hear the girl was returning to England. But what to do? If only Mr. Fortescue—had she done right in what she

had told her about Mr. Fortescue, or rather in what she had withheld? She did not know. She only knew that she had followed the command, 'Speak not evil one of another;' 'Who art thou that judgest another?' But Mrs. Betterton was far too careful a student of her Bible to be satisfied by the idea that she was obeying any isolated text. And she was more guided by the agony of mind she had passed through years ago, before she had nerved herself to remonstrate with Mr. Fortescue, laid upon her as a duty, as she then thought, by her knowledge of his way of life. The recollection of that agony made her shrink from lightly communicating any word of it to one so far less calculated than ever she herself had been to make a right use of her knowledge. But was it fair by Lilian? she asked herself. Then her eyes filled with tears, looking at the girl who had just arrived from Yunnan, singing Psalms in her heart all the way. She moved about as if in a seraphic vision, for was she not about to be united to the man of her heart—who loved her? Were they not together to work in the Lord's vineyard? It brought back to Mrs. Betterton her own early days in China.

'Recollect we all love you—we all love you,' repeated Miss Pearce, embracing Lilian again and again. 'God bless you, wherever you are!' cried Dr. Maxwell, wringing her hands almost off, whilst little Mark stood crying upon the river bank, having been fairly torn out of her embrace, and Susanna only kept from crying by holding her eyes very wide open and pinching her hands, as she said afterwards. Only Janie Frost, of them all, seemed to think she would yet become a missionary. It was a relief to turn to Threshie Reid with his kindly face and jovial voice: 'Glad to see you off, Miss Grey; my boat will start presently, and anchor beside yours to-night. It is the old, old story. I can't get my things back from the wash, and I must have some clean clothes to *start* on my trip, you know. But I'll be near you, watching over you at nightfall. You'll still be under consular protection, so don't feel frightened. And is this your companion? Glad to make your acquaintance, Miss Lea. You'll take care of Miss Grey, I'm sure. And she'll take care of you, too. But we all think no end of Miss Grey in Chungking, you know.' It seemed the one kindly word wanting to the farewells, and they all felt better after it was spoken.

Miss Lea was wearing Chinese dress, grey and black, as befitted a missionary, as she thought, rather than the bright

pinks and blues Chinese ladies themselves more often affect. At the best she would not have been good-looking, and Chinese dress did not show her off to any advantage. But it was easy to see that at least now and then she was, as the Italians say, 'touching heaven with her fingers.' Lilian felt like a naughty child beside her. Miss Lea produced a bag, and drew from it a Bible, which she laid open on the table of the cabin. 'I know all John by heart,' she said with a smile; 'and so does James. But we agreed always to keep it open before us whenever possible. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."'

'What is the use of keeping it open before you if you don't read it?' asked Lilian. 'And what is the use of reading it if you know it by heart?'

Miss Lea smiled, as if these were mysteries people not truly converted could not penetrate.

'You are making an *idol* of the Gospel of St. John,' said Lilian, then became conscious of having been irritated into speaking crossly, and felt covered with shame. She had heard before that China made women cross, but even this recollection did not comfort her. She felt humbled in her own eyes.

As to Miss Lea, it never occurred to her as possible that she herself could be an idolator, she who had come out from among the Bible Christians because even their doctrine was not pure enough for her.

How different was that going down from the coming up! In two days they had passed Fuchow of the wonderful boats with up-curved sterns, passed the picturesque Chinese Hades, passed Chungchow of the bamboo groves, passed all the fair, open, tree-clad, farm-besprinkled country above Wauhsien, passed the lovely vale of Wauhsien. In five days from leaving Chungking without an accident of any kind, they were back at Ichang again, to find Mr. Mortimer gone and Mr. Ashurst gone, and a new Consul and Commissioner in their places. Only the smells remained unaltered, and the mountains, and the echoes of the boatmen's songs, and the reflections in the water. But the river itself was swollen beyond all Kunsing, and seemed to have swallowed up half Ichang, though it is true the Commissioner's temple was still there, and so were her Majesty's sheds, as the present Consul called his dwelling.

Miss Lea's betrothed was also there waiting for her. He had gone down first to make arrangements.



'I didn't marry my girl till I was forty,' said the steamer pilot. 'Hadn't saved enough money. And if you weren't provided for out of the mission funds you wouldn't be marrying at twenty-three, my fine fellow.' Pilots will express themselves after this fashion sometimes. But it is dreadful to think this remark was apparently addressed to Lilian.

'He will not make any the worse missionary for being happy,' she replied quietly. But there was a look in her eyes that changed the current of the pilot's thoughts.

'He'll be a lucky man who gets her. The little beauty!' he said to a messmate. 'Oh, the others are welcome to all the missionary ladies. But there's one man I envy. She's real, you see,' he added, 'and she is not a missionary. How should she be? If the missionaries were real, do you think there'd be all these missionary babies? Canting humbugs! I'd cant too if I were paid for it.' Thus coarsely will some people express themselves.

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## CHAPTER XXI

### WAS IT FATE OR CHARACTER?

He who inflicts an injury in broad daylight will be punished by men; but he who inflicts an injury in secret will be punished by demons.—CHWANOTSE, *Lao-tsze's great Disciple*.

Look in my face; my name is Might-have-been;  
I am also called No-more, Too-late, Farewell.

ROSSETTI.

It was in Mrs. Robinson's company that Claude Fortescue had come up river. She had undertaken to examine into the condition of Wuhu, and the furnishing of the Commissioner's house there, for Mr. Stuckey was returning to his port again, and was bringing with him a bride. The American heiress had consented to become his wife, and she *guessed* she would see China a bit before taking Mr. Stuckey to America. People declared now she was not an heiress at all. Anyway, Mrs. Robinson had been buying furniture, and to get that furniture into its place, and herself and Nelly up the river, being naturally too much for an unmarried woman, it was a matter of course now that she should turn to Mr. Fortescue to

help her. 'So there's another good fellow done for,' moralised Mr. Mortimer. 'I'd rather he'd gone in for any open vice you please. A woman like Mrs. Robinson cankers the very soul out of a man. Look at the state to which she has reduced her husband.'

'I certainly don't understand the terms they are on. These *ménages à trois* are common in England, according to the society papers, but they must scandalise the Chinese horribly.'

'They're common among pitmen, I dare say,' growled Mr. Mortimer, 'boors and boresses, who know no better. As to scandalising the Chinese, I don't see that much matters. They are so scandalised by us anyhow—our dress, which they think indecent—our manners, which they think we haven't got—and then there's opium. Not a man Jack of them doesn't believe we taught them to smoke it. "You take our good tea," they say, "and give us your poisonous opium in exchange, in order to kill us off the face of the earth."'

Then they went at it tooth and nail. No two Englishmen in the East are ever found to agree about the opium question, possibly because they are mostly ready to take either side for the sake of conversation, and have heard it so often discussed there is not the least difficulty about this, or even about a 'Right-about-face!' should the other drop off asleep in the course of the argument, or by any other chance be led to forget on which side he began. The Consuls, being retained to protect British interests, are as a rule particularly alive to the force of pro-Chinese arguments, and apt to take the pro-Chinese view of a case. This is only natural, considering the perversity of man.

Mrs. Robinson in like manner had captivated Claude Fortescue's attention by what might have been thought the unlikeliest method, and which she had kept as the very last string to her bow. She had broached wonderful theories on the subject of the Chinese language, quoted whole paragraphs of Rhys Davids' admirable sketch of Buddhism without any acknowledgment to the author, and let drop unprinted bits of information she had picked up from other admirers and painstakingly noted. For Mrs. Robinson's specialty was Sinologues. In vain! Claude Fortescue never showed surprise. She tried him with curious facts about Chinese cookery, pointed out how 'costive' and 'irresolute' are one and the same word in Chinese, and hinted that the decisions

of the censors might more often than not depend upon the 'great masters,' as Chinese call their cooks. Claude Fortescue only smiled, and said that he had heard that the battle of Waterloo was lost through a fit of indigestion. Then Mrs. Robinson tried a new line. She denounced the false judgments of society, its hypocrisy, its absurd subterfuges. With an airy touch she showed she knew something, or pretended she knew something, of the previous lives of most of the married men of her acquaintance; then said, in a suave tone of merely continuing the conversation, 'You have not sent your boy to the Eurasian school, I was glad to hear. I consider that Eurasian school a great mistake.'

If a gulf had suddenly opened at Mr. Fortescue's feet, he could not have been more astonished than at a woman's speaking to him thus on such a subject.

'Mr. Robinson was asked to contribute, so I went to see the school for myself on my way through Shanghai. It puts the children in a false position. If their fathers are able and willing to pay for them—and, to do the men justice, most, who can, are—why should the children have this sort of brand affixed to them, as if they had been brought up on charity? Why should not those whose fathers can afford it just be sent to the best school there is, and be given the best possible chance in life, poor children? Depend upon it, it is all hypocrisy, my dear Mr. Fortescue, people's objecting to the children doing so, as if they were to blame in any way. And the very people who do so the most strenuously, as if their children would be contaminated, are generally those who have led the loosest lives. I always set my face against hypocrisy, which is one reason why I am so often misunderstood. Of course I should not speak so frankly to everyone; only I think you share my feeling, that it is hypocrisy that poisons the world. Oh! these goody-goody people, with their saintly airs of pretending to see nothing, make me sick! They are peeping through their fingers all the while! I asked the lady at the head of the Eurasian school where the mothers of the children were. "Oh, we know nothing of the mothers!" she said. Then I asked, "Who are the fathers?" "We never mention them," she said, "unless when we receive their remittances. And even then we do not know that it is for their own children. They may be charged by others to remit. Except in some cases, where the children have been publicly acknow-

ledged, we name no names. It might lead to idle talk." Idle talk, indeed ! as if this poor, humble, little effort to set the children on their way in the world were the only thing that would set people talking !'

Mr. Fortescue's nerves were still vibrating too violently from the effects of her first onslaught to detect the mixture of spurious charity, malevolent desire to look into other people's lives, and feeling about to discover which views as to morals or immorals would most commend themselves to him.

But after this she often talked yet more plainly to him about *other* people's secrets, not about his own. For to this she noticed he had not responded. And his soul was slowly but surely cankered, as Mr. Mortimer had said it must be. After the French Salon, the English Academy seems tame at first. He wanted more fire and water, but chiefly fire ; for, without apparently intending to do it, Mrs. Robinson was justifying him in his own eyes. He had never attempted to do this himself, never been able for a moment to efface how far he had fallen beneath his own standard. But now she led him to think he was but as other men, better indeed than most men, only that there was in reality no better nor worse. His mental agony at Chungking he began to look back upon as owing to a diseased condition of brain ; his hesitations in England as inherent faults of character, founded alike upon no real cause. He wanted more of Mrs. Robinson now ; he could not do without her conversation, her low views of life mingled with an assumption of a higher sincerity, a more disinterested charity, not than most people, but than anyone else. She would talk of Mrs. G. J. Smith in the tenderest tones—how sincerely she hoped the poor silly little thing might not burn her wings. Mr. G. J. Smith drank, of course ; was doubtless rough and revolting in his ways at home ; ' besides, we all know what sort of man he has been. So I keep an eye upon her. That is why she does not quite like me. But I trust—I do trust—we shall keep her straight between us.' Then she spoke of the divorce case now pending ; said she did not believe one word of the accusations brought against the woman—' young and lovely, and so people must be ill-natured. But I declare to you she is innocent—spotless. Whatever the judge may decide, I shall never alter my belief in her. We all know how these cases are got up, and we women should stand by one another. She was my most intimate friend.' This sounded rather noble, considering that

there could be little doubt now how that divorce case would end. It is true, everyone else would say it of her—that the two had been inseparable, so that it might have been only a daringly precautionary measure to say it herself. And whether it was noble in this connection to drag in Mrs. Smith's name, Mr. Fortescue did not pause to consider. He was simply carried along by Mrs. Robinson. If she had had insinuating manners perhaps he would have been more upon his guard, but she was so tall and carried herself so upright, never leant back or lounged like other women, it seemed impossible to suspect her of design of any sort. Thus he never realised that in their long *tête-à-têtes*, now increasingly frequent—for Nelly out of hearing, before or behind, could not be said to count—Mrs. Robinson flattered him as never woman had flattered him before; nor that, while pretending to make him attend upon her, she was really seeing after all his creature comforts, till he had a feeling of *bien-être* such as he had never experienced before. He was to go down from Wuhu, and she and Nelly to proceed to Hankow alone, but he was beginning to think he would accompany them farther, on the pretext of the Hankow races, when Mrs. Robinson sent him off to the downward-bound boat, that had just come in, to ask if there were any news for her. If there were nothing especially requiring her at home, she thought she would stay a day longer at Wuhu. There were some yellow lilies in the neighbourhood, roots of which she much wanted to dig up and take back with her. 'And ask the captain to luncheon,' she said. 'It is always my policy to be on friendly terms with captains. And those sort of people like to be asked out, even if they don't come.'

The captain, however, accepted with pleasure; the ship was, for once in a way, going to take in a good deal of cargo at Wuhu, and they would be delayed some hours. There was nothing going on at Hankow, he said, and he had no message for Mrs. Robinson. It was the same captain they had come up river with a few days before, and, like all men she laid herself out to please, he was a great admirer of that lady's good sense, as he called it. Not that that prevented his indulging in the usual river gossip about her. What would the river be without its gossip, with so many idle hours on hand?

'Any passengers?' asked Claude Fortescue.

'One,' said the captain; and was at that moment called away.

Claude Fortescue sauntered into the saloon but saw no one there, only a Chinese phrase-book lying open, which he took up and looked at for a few moments, then laid down, greatly dissatisfied with the Romanisation of the Chinese characters. It was not according to Wade. He wondered absently whose it was, then sauntered out upon the deck. No one there but the second officer and one of the engineers leaning over the side, looking at Wuhu and chatting with one of the Customs staff. He was telling them about Mr. Stuckey's new furniture ; 'furnishing a Commissioner's house, and with a Consul in tow, even Mrs. Robinson must have her hands full,' said one of the party, whom Mrs. Robinson had never thought it worth her while to lay herself out to please.

'Oh, as for Mr. Fortescue, he is regularly tied to her apron-strings. Disgusting I call it,' said another in the same predicament. Then between them they said a great deal more, none of which was audible to Claude Fortescue, but all of which was distinctly audible in the adjacent cabins. Finally, having in few words said more than they, any of them, meant or believed, they turned aside to the far more interesting subject of the next golf meeting at Hankow. The Customs officer only wished he could get up for it. 'No chance of that, worse luck !' he said, 'with a new Commissioner just arriving. Stuckey's a good sort, they say, but I haven't served under him yet ; and he needs you to be all there, I hear.' An animated discussion of Mr. Stuckey's character, and the effect having a wife would be likely to have upon him, then ensued. Mr. Fortescue went back to Mrs. Robinson without any news, and they settled they would take chairs as soon as the captain left them, and go and look for the yellow lilies that very afternoon. 'The races are not for two days yet,' she said, 'and Nelly would enjoy another day in the country.'

'I half think I will go on with you to Hankow and see the races,' said Claude Fortescue.

'Do,' said Mrs. Robinson. 'We have a spare room. And I should like you to know my husband. People in general have no idea what a clever man he really is.'

People in general had not, and he did not anticipate any special pleasure from making Mr. Robinson's acquaintance. But Mrs. Robinson's society had become essential to him now. It was like cotton wool, wrapping him round and shielding him from all the rest of the world. She was always accused

of entirely engrossing her men, but other women had no idea how very comfortable she made them, each in their turn. She never had more than one at a time. Human woman could not have endured more than one at a time, indeed, for Mrs. Robinson toiled like a slave for the man who was her friend at the time. It was only unfortunate for Mr. Robinson that that time was past for him. But he and Nelly took care of each other generally, and everyone liked Mr. Robinson but for his subjection to his wife. As a man of business he was immensely respected, but he did not grow richer, and for this his wife despised him. Toiling as a merchant year after year and day after day, in order to lose money, paying for the pleasure of it as it were, made her husband small in her eyes. It made Mr. Robinson small in his own. He felt humiliated by the consciousness of it, and especially so before his wife, who knew the secrets of the business house, and—to give her her due—cut her cloth according to her means, and so dexterously that no one ever guessed from the Robinsons' way of living how things were going in the business. This requires brains on the part of a woman, as well as the power of keeping her own counsel. Mrs. Robinson was possessed of both. This expedition to Japan had been entirely on Nelly's account ; the child had outgrown her strength ; and whilst it gave Mr. Robinson the air of being in no lack of ready money, it had been carried out with the strictest attention to economy. In those days there was as yet no sanatorium near Nagasaki for the benefit of Shanghai, the very next port as it were, and Arima was given over to missionaries, and Takaradzuka, with its maple groves and its mineral waters, as yet undiscovered. But the small economies to which women whose husbands never have any money to spare are daily driven make a man friend, with whom they are *quite* at their ease, a very agreeable appendage. Mrs. Robinson appreciated this as she sat in Mr. Stuckey's house, among Mr. Stuckey's handsome new furniture—by ordering which she had escaped any questions about bills of her own of some standing—and entertained the captain with Claude Fortescue's wines, for of course he had relieved her of all bother in that matter. But she did the honours admirably, Claude Fortescue sitting silent by the while, or making little efforts to entertain Nelly. Nelly was very easily entertained, like her father, she was not *exigeante*. And Mr. Fortescue enjoyed watching Mrs. Robinson too much to talk himself ; she did it so well, sat so upright, was such an admirably

blended compound of graciousness to the man she wished to please, yet of dignity, as never forgetting she was one of the leading ladies in Hankow, and consequently of another sphere. And withal she was entertaining, especially when she gave a little side glance to himself, whenever there was a *double entendre* in her speech that was quite lost upon the honest captain. As the luncheon progressed the latter felt more and more that he had never been so thoroughly appreciated, as also that he was making himself extraordinarily agreeable. He had thought Mrs. Robinson 'a charming lady' on the steamer, but what a relief it was now to talk to her without the damping presence of the junior officers, and especially of that cynical engineer, who one always knew would come out with something nasty afterwards, if he did not at the time. He sat now beaming and flushed with success.

Mrs. Robinson also looked conscious of having charmed, as she sat at the head of the table looking a little more queen-like than usual as she smiled a little innocent smile of general kindness at all the world, and the two men in particular; her elbows lightly resting on the table, and her loose lace sleeves falling back from her arms so as to show what she considered one of her chief beauties. But it was rather difficult to think of more topics of conversation, and now that she had persuaded him to light up, the 'gallant mariner,' as she meant to call him afterwards to Mr. Fortescue, did not look at all like leaving. So the words dropped out quite carelessly, not in the least because she was inquisitive to know—Mrs. Robinson never asked questions, other people's proceedings did not interest her in the least—'So you have no passengers this voyage?' She said it as a statement of fact, with a little lifting of the eyelid in Mr. Fortescue's direction that he understood to mean, 'Now do entertain him for me for a little while

'Yes, one,' said the captain. 'A young lady going down to learn to be a doctor.' They all smiled. Was it not the end of a most pleasant little convivial luncheon? And did not Mrs. Robinson always smile at any effort on the part of her own sex to, as she called it, emulate men? There is one comfort for men doctors, however. If all the men in the world ever took to being doctored by women, women of Mrs. Robinson's type would always cry out for men doctors. 'She is confided to the whole missionary society of Shanghai,' continued the captain. 'I am to give her over to the head of the missionaries himself.'



'They would be rather puzzled to say who that is,' laughed Mrs. Robinson. 'All squabbling with one another about everything! Do you approve of lady doctors, Mr. Fortescue? As for me, I think the idea positively disgusting!'

'Positively disgusting,' he repeated, with something of his old whimsical expression, 'for a woman like you.' Did his eyes rest for a moment on those well-moulded arms of which she was so proud, and fancy how they would look with a dissecting knife? For he seemed to shudder for a moment. 'Or for any woman one cared for, yes. But, after all, there are women and women. Nelly here might be a doctor, I think. What do you say, Nelly?'

'Oh, I should not like——' began the child.

'No, I should think not, Nelly,' said her mother, looking at her, half-puzzled by the distinction he thus made between mother and daughter, as, indeed, 'she often was by Mr. Fortescue's sayings. 'You and I are womanly women.'

'Well, this seems too much of a young lady for a doctor,' said the captain. 'I don't understand it myself. I should have labelled her "Glass with care! This side up!" if I had had anything to do with it. She's a delicate little piece of goods to be travelling about China alone. And I didn't know her from Adam when she was put into my hands at Hankow by the head of the missionaries there. "We hope you will show every attention to this young lady," he said,' continued the captain, mimicking his manner, so that Mr. Fortescue and Nelly both laughed—only Mrs. Robinson did not. '"She is very highly connected and a great heiress, and you cannot do too much for her."'

'Why, who in the world is she, then?' asked Mrs. Robinson. But she knew already. There could not be two of them in China. Then as he said, 'Grey—a Miss Grey,' with a great peal of laughter she exclaimed, 'What, that silly little girl?' but she carefully abstained from any side glance at Mr. Fortescue as she did so. 'I suppose her flirtation with the up-country doctor has not succeeded. Well, I pity the doctors she studies under; she is one of that sort who must always be up to some mischief.'

'She doesn't seem up to much mischief now,' said the captain. 'She just sits all day reading a Chinese book, till I think the poor girl will grow positively silly over it. She hasn't got a morsel of colour. If I were her father or mother, I'd just pack her off to England. But she has got none, I

suppose—hasn't got a soul belonging to her, it seems. Well, I'm really very much obliged to you for the most delightful tiffin, I'm sure, but—why, bless me, how late it is! I had no idea of it.'

'I will go with you,' said Claude Fortescue, rising.

Mrs. Robinson glanced at him now. He looked dazed, the old puzzled expression had come back into his eyes. There was a deep furrow in his forehead. 'Not in this sun, Mr. Fortescue! Not in this sun!' But he seemed not even to notice that she spoke to him, nor did it make any difference when the captain also protested it was too hot, and he had no idea it was so late; he must run for it. In the end it was Mrs. Robinson herself who, tall and stately, gave Mr. Fortescue his hat and umbrella. 'Your sun-hat, since you must be going!' she said, with rather a rueful smile. 'A wilful man—but come back in time for the yellow lilies.'

Lilian Grey came forward to meet the captain as he stepped on deck, but so transfigured, he gazed at her amazed. Was this the girl who had sat over her book so pale and spiritless, this girl with the flaming colour, holding herself so erect, her body so daintily poised, the neck looking so proud of the exquisitely shaped head? 'My word, she is a little beauty, and no mistake!' he said to himself, as she held out her hand to him with the air of a princess at the very least. 'To think of your being late, captain! I have been almost thinking of taking command of the steamer myself,' she said, with an air that, like her words, was all unlike the Lilian we have known till now.

'And very well you'd have done it, I am sure,' said the startled but admiring captain. 'But I must get my papers. And there's a friend of yours come off to see you.'

'How do you do, Mr. Fortescue?' and there was Lilian putting a small gloved hand into his with the most perfect self-possession, looking straight into his eyes and smiling like a young lady going through a London season, or a mechanical doll.

Claude Fortescue, with his big sun-hat and the pucker in his forehead, perspiring and breathless, was more than ever at a disadvantage confronted with her dainty grace—her *mannerism*, was it not? But he managed to stammer out, 'I have only just heard you were here. But what is the meaning of it? You are alone, and——'

'I am alone for the moment,' said Lilian lightly. Some-

how, with the manner she had assumed had come the consciousness that it was not quite the right thing for a young lady of sorts to be travelling about the world alone. 'I am on my way to England to make arrangements.'

'To England?' he asked, aghast.

'By the next mail,' she said, still speaking in the same light conventional tone. It was an idea that had only come into her head while she was speaking. But it seemed to her best, the only thing to do now. With the talk of that morning still ringing in her ears, she should never feel safe till she had put one ocean at least between herself and Claude Fortescue, and he must never guess that it was him she fled. 'I had thought of studying medicine in Shanghai;' she watched his face as she said the words, and her own quivered as she said the word medicine. The furrow on Claude Fortescue's forehead deepened perceptibly. 'But there are sure to be difficulties. It is much better to go to England at once. There everything is arranged. And there, too, I can sign all the legal documents that may be necessary, consult my solicitor, and settle with my guardian, and—everybody.' She spoke with the self-possession and with something of the arrogance of a young lady of the world, yet the voice was the voice of Lilian Grey, the tones pure, and every syllable distinctly articulated. 'And you—you are better, I hope? I heard you had been ill.'

'I am quite well,' he answered impatiently. 'But why do you want to study medicine? It is out of the question.'

'Do you think so?' said she, with almost a shrug of her little shoulders—her father's shrug, if she had known it. She had last seen it at Constantinople. How had it come back to her now?

The bell was ringing, hawsers straining, Chinese hastening on board at the last moment. 'I am sorry to hurry you,' said the captain. Claude Fortescue stood dazed. 'You leave by the next mail?' he asked.

'By the next mail,' repeated Lilian mechanically.

Other men's hands pushed and pulled him. He was drawn on to the hulk only at the last moment, violently resisting. 'What on earth did you do that for?' he asked, looking round angrily. 'I have a right to go down in the steamer if I choose.' And he was about to spring back on her again. But that was too dangerous. They detained him now forcibly, whether with or against his will. The steamer was moving

down river. Surely Claude Fortescue was not mistaken. Surely, as he had turned to leap, Lilian herself had sprung forward as if to save him, and was standing looking back now, her lips lightly parted, her face all sympathy, her hands somewhat tightly clasped. He did not know. All he knew was, that the one thing to learn now was when there would be another steamer going down river. To-morrow morning ! That would do ! The mail would be leaving Saturday morning. So long as he could get down by Friday, that must do now. And the next steamer ought to get there on Thursday.

It was late—late evening—before Mrs. Robinson saw him again. He had forgotten all about the yellow lilies, neither did she remind him. He saw her off next day to Hankow, but he said nothing more about the races, nor did she allude to them. He looked so sad and anxious, almost anyone must have felt sorry for him, but as she said good-bye to him, Mrs. Robinson said in a curious tone, a sweet, grating tone, if such a thing be possible, ‘If you mean to offer yourself to that young lady, I wouldn’t make a clean breast of everything. Married life requires some reservations, and little girls are apt to be so narrow-minded.’

It was a Parthian arrow, but she knew the wound would rankle.

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## CHAPTER XXII

### A STERN CHASE

Sweet, had I boldly spoken then,  
How might my love have garnered thee !  
I missed the spell—I watch’d it break—  
And such come never twice to men.

BUCHANAN.

THE downward-bound steamer did not arrive. People began to look uneasy. As to Claude Fortescue, he was half-distracted. He stood motionless under the Commissioner’s pavilion on the hill, staring up river, till he sank exhausted on the ground, blinded by the glare, crushed by protracted disappointment. He hurried from the Customs to the Consulate, and from the Consulate to the Customs. How his own conduct appeared to himself now, it is needless to portray. Lilian Grey had come out to China of her own accord

—a joy beyond his wildest dreams! And now she was going home again. And he had not spoken a word; he had let her slip through his fingers—the girl he had always loved, the girl he adored, the girl he had almost gone out of his mind about! Was he out of his mind still? he began to wonder. The mail would be gone by Saturday morning, and *if* the steamer did not arrive soon—— Why, it must be almost time for the steamer after the next to be arriving.

‘There must be trouble somewhere,’ said the Consul very gravely. Trouble somewhere! Was there not trouble enough at Wuhu? answered Claude Fortescue’s wildly beating heart. There is no egotist like your man in anxiety. ‘And, as usual, the telegraph wires are broken. They have always wit enough to cut the wires. It is not at Kiukiang; that’s all right. But if it is at Hankow, that will be the biggest thing yet. The people there hate foreigners worse than anywhere; and then there are so many Hunan boatmen about. Poor Ashley! Poor Berner! I can fancy Berner at his wits’ ends wondering what Mrs. Berner would advise in such an unexpected—such a wholly unexpected—contingency. We have telegraphed to Shanghai for men-of-war, but I feel sorry for Mrs. Ashley—*very*!’

And all the while Claude Fortescue had not a thought even to spare for Mrs. Robinson and Nelly. He saw one little face, out of which the colour seemed to have faded, and he seemed always to see it through a mist of tears. Till those tears were dried how could he spare a thought for anyone else? He knew it—he knew all now that she had meant him never to know; knew that Lilian Grey was leaving China because he was there; and was determined—if he could—to detain her, and make her happy in spite of herself. In his thoughts now he realised with a sudden blush she had always been ‘My Lilian!’ The idea she could ever possibly become anyone else’s Lilian was like sacrilege. But how guilty he felt towards her! What was an ordinary Chinese riot in comparison, even if it were at Hankow, and on a large scale? But it was not at Hankow after all. It was at a place to which they had never given even a thought, a mere place of call, where there had been for some years past one solitary Customs officer, and where there had been now for some years a missionary station opposite to their bungalow sanatorium, perched upon the hill on the other side of the river.

Alas ! and alas ! a steamer had been late, and so the young missionary just out from England, who had only come there to see a sick friend comfortably installed at the bungalow opposite, had found himself obliged to sleep at Wusüeh one night—one night only ! How unimportant, how trifling it seemed ! And the Customs officer, whose time was up, and who was going away upon leave, had been obliged to stay one night longer, his relief not arriving. That night of all nights the Chinese attacked the missionaries' houses. The men were away ; there were only women and children there. When the houses were set on fire the children were taken out in their night dresses. A little child—to save its life—was just thrown like a ball to some woman in the crowd. Extraordinary to relate, she took care of it, and restored it unhurt after some hours. The ladies and children took refuge in some beggars' huts. They cowered down inside, hidden under old rubbish, whilst the beggars sat outside stolidly smoking. The captain of the downward-bound steamer that had arrived late, alas ! had already started again, was leaving the place behind, when a boat handed up a piece of dirty torn paper. Difficult to make anything of the scrap of paper ! But, strangely enough, that captain had saved the refugees from every riot on the river ; did so always, till his own house was destroyed ; and then he came up late. He was the first now, and he saw that there was writing on the paper. And the women and children were saved, though in what condition it may be imagined, bruised and beaten, terrified and exhausted ! And the two men ! Who knows ? Who will ever know ? Evidently they had fought. It seemed as if both had tried to come to the women and children ; as if, but for that, both might have saved themselves. But all that remained were two frightfully mangled bodies. Just the result of sleeping one night at Wusüeh ! one night because the steamer was late ! They were dead ! Both dead ! When that news flashed along the wires the whole of China thrilled. There was arming even in Shanghai. The Germans formed a brand-new German volunteer corps, old soldiers all, who marched and wheeled, and did everything in the German style to the German word of command. The Portuguese would not be left behind, and after some objections, and much wounding of national feelings, marched, stepping out to the admiration of everyone. The old-established English volunteers nearly doubled their numbers, and quite doubled their attendances. And even elderly

citizens, who had never handled a rifle before, nor dreamt of danger since Shanghai had been a settlement, came out now, and formed a home guard—to defend the wives and children when the others might have to march against the enemy. Even the ladies received their instructions. Three guns, and the fire-bell rung rapidly, and those along the Bubbling Well Road—the fashionable drive—were to muster at the Country Club, where they would find their division of the home guard ready to defend them. The others were all to take refuge at the Consulate, and so to the various men-of-war in port; though it was said the Shanghai babies alone would sink them, so few were left now, with men-of-war defending all the outports up the river. Ladies who had never paid any attention to the riots before thought and talked of nothing else now, turning white and starting at every cracker even that went off. Some packed up their jewellery; and there were houses where even teaspoons were allowed to run short.

But Claude Fortescue was unmoved by the first news of it all. He hardly heard about the murdered men, did not realise the position of the women and children. His one idea was that the steamer was late, and that it was a mere matter of chance or the tides whether he reached Shanghai before the mail left. And thus after all these years it depended upon the earlier or later shifting of a tide whether he could ever tell Lilian Grey how long, how deeply, he had loved her, with the least hope of winning her to be his wife; for once let her leave China, and even he felt that it would be impossible to account to her for his not having spoken sooner. As it was, no thought of the difficulty of explanation troubled him. His one fixed idea was that if he could but once see her again he would tell her how he loved her, and that would be all that was needed. Lilian would understand. For he remembered her looking back in the Niukan Gorge; he remembered her standing on the deck of the steamer that bore her from him, pale, with clasped hands. And he felt sure that she loved him; and love overlooks everything—it does not only forgive.

‘It is no use hurrying on,’ said the captain, as they stopped at Chinkiang. ‘We cannot get over the Lanshan crossing in the dark.’

Claude Fortescue went on shore and wrote a telegram. He addressed it to Miss Grey, passenger per French mail, to the care of the agent; then followed the Messageries office.

It was an enormous address, but the telegram was only : 'I implore you not to leave China till you have seen me. Coming down as fast as I can.—CLAUDE FORTESCUE.' After he had sent that telegram he grew calmer. Lilian would be sure to wait, he said to himself. But as the steamer proceeded on its course fresh doubts arose. Would the agent get the telegram in time ? Would he understand who it was for ? Would the French mail have steamed across the bar to Woosung already ? And might not Lilian, as ladies so often did, have gone on board the night before, and gone down in her ? Then, if the agent waited to deliver the telegram till the tender went down with the mails in the morning, with her boxes in the hold already, and her place booked, it might—might perhaps be too late.

He walked the deck all night, recalling to himself a sentence in a sentimental novel he had once read, that had at the time much tickled his fancy : 'On such little issues great events depend.' There, so far as he remembered, the hero had not offered, because his lady-love found herself obliged to drive back from a picnic, instead of riding, thus depriving him of the *tête-à-tête* on which he had counted for the purpose. In another novel he recollected the catastrophe occurred because there were still two bottles of particularly old port in the cellar, which the girl's father could not deny himself the pleasure of drinking, and therefore would stay two nights longer in the hero's house. That was a very subtle, complicated story, and Claude Fortescue went over and over it. If six bottles, the temptation would not have been so great, because it would have seemed impossible to stay six nights longer ; if one, the catastrophe might have been deferred for at least one twenty-four hours. The danger seemed to have been in that precise number—two. Then he went over his own past life ; saw it all with the distinctness of a drowning man ; saw that, ever since he had known her, the one thing he had desired, the one thing his life needed, was Lilian as his wife, and that whenever he had thought of the future—of late he had not done so—it had always been with the feeling that whether by his doing, or without his doing, it was inevitable, it must come about, it was ordained. And now she was alone, unfriended, unhappy, and with evidently a capacity for becoming something different from what he had ever before seen her ! Who could tell to what sudden resolutions she might not be moved ? She might even be accepting some one



else ! 'I have wooed her and not won—not tried to win !' Could there be any position more trying to a sensitive, high-souled girl ? 'Do you suppose, sir, that a rose, sir, plucks itself to deck your breast ?' came back to him across the years. A favourite cousin had been wont to sing it to him long ago—long ago. He remembered how she used to glance round and smile as she said these words, and how the chords of the piano sounded. She was the mother of a large family of children now. But he could hear her girlish voice ringing out quite distinctly—see her smile.

'The tide is turned. I *think* we shall catch the mail, sir,' said one of the officers.

'Think ! O God !'

There lay the long, smart-looking French mail at Woosung, and there lay the tender alongside. Claude Fortescue succeeded in getting the river steamer stopped ; he let himself down into a sampan.

'Row !' The boat rowed. 'A hundred dollars if you are in time.'

But what can a Woosung sampan do ? 'She is off ! she is gone !' The French mail was moving now ! 'Did you not get my telegram ?' cried Claude Fortescue to the agent on the tender.

'To Miss Grey ? Yes. I delivered it. But she said she did not understand it—could not make it out at all,' called back the agent.

It would not have been the first time that a young lady had been fetched back from off a mail steamer to be married. In Shanghai, as elsewhere, men are sometimes too late in making up their minds. And sometimes they do it just in the very nick of time. But this does not occur every day. And the people on the French mail took Claude Fortescue merely for a man who was too late to sail with them, a passenger who had missed his passage. 'He can come on by such or such a boat,' they said to one another, pitying him the while. He was indeed to be pitied just then.

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## CHAPTER XXIII

## TAKING COUNSEL

Princes!—and you, most valorous,  
 Nobles and barons of all degrees!  
 Harken awhile to the prayer of us—  
 Prodigals driven of destinies!  
 Nothing we ask or of gold or fees;  
 Harry us not with the hounds, we pray;  
 Lo—for the surcoat's hem we seize—  
 Give us—ah! give us—but yesterday.

AUSTIN DOBSON.

IF a man do but hurry to a London station to catch the train for Liverpool and arrive to find it gone, there is a sense of the tangible facts of life being too strong for him. How much more so in Claude Fortescue's case! He had realised the position beforehand. He could *not* telegraph again! If he wished, and could ascertain her English address—which he supposed he might be able to do—he might write a week hence, if indeed he had got her address by that time, and expect an answer, if she wrote it, three months afterwards. No, it was all over! He knew that now. Lilian Grey, as she might have been, was gone out of his life. And yet not as though she had never been. She would remain for him for ever a haunting memory, 'a bright, pure presence, half misunderstood;' a child with a woman's heart, looking out on life with a child's fearless eyes from underneath the shade of a big flapping hat; a girl who for him would never grow older. The real Lilian might moil and toil and suffer! For him she would remain ever the same. The real Lilian might become a medical student—but oh! the pity of it! the pity of it! Surely that could never come to pass! Yet, for the first time since he had known her, Claude Fortescue felt as if since their last meeting he had nothing to reproach himself with. It was not his fault that this new riot had broken out. He had sent his telegram. She had received it. He had done what he could since he last saw her.

If there is one virtue more than another that China teaches its denizens, it is that of submission to the inevitable. And before nightfall Claude Fortescue was experiencing what Mdme. Guyot calls 'the great peace' of 'an accepted sorrow.'

It was over, all the anxious questioning, the debating with himself, and unrest ! Heaven had decided.

And once more he murmured to himself—

‘To cease from all wrong doing,

‘To get virtue,

‘To cleanse one’s own heart.’

For as the Chinese have made a strange intermixture of what they call the Three Religions for themselves, so do most Europeans who study Chinese lore ; the well-worn Christian truth looking often so much more striking in Buddhist or Confucian dress. And the Taoist religion, Claude Fortescue’s especial study, rather because it is the least understood than because it was most congenial to his own mind, afforded no such concise epitome of duty as this celebrated verse of Buddha—Shih-Chia-Fu, as they call him in China. Then remembering that ‘Patience is the most necessary thing to have in this world,’ he sat down—a changed man, it is true, with head more bowed, shoulders more stooped, and looking and feeling years older than yesterday, but without further spasm of frantic self-pity, or even of pity for Lilian, for whom he could do nothing now—to consider how best to accomplish his work in life, part of which he took to be the seeing after the well-being of his children. He found them well cared for by their mother, comparatively clean and comfortable, and apparently loved. They were too young for more as yet. He took the little girl in his arms, and tried to love her too, if it were only for her blue eyes. But he could not. She was his child, for whose bringing into the world he was responsible, for whose well-being he felt it his duty to provide. But love the little thing he could not. He had seen many Chinese children to whom he had felt more drawn. In both children the mixture of race was so painfully evident, the degradation of bastardy. As he held the little girl he saw the mother watching him with the inexpressive Chinese gaze that tells nothing, but he felt as if she recognised his want of love—possibly also his attempt to feel it. But that probably was beyond her. Anyhow he saw that she instinctively recognised that this was their last meeting, the final parting between them. And it touched him to see that she was evidently sorry that it was so, and yet that she uttered no word of complaint. ‘Can I not at least still darn your socks for you ?’ she asked. Then as she understood she was never again to work or wash for him, never again to surprise him with

Chinese dishes, or dexterous embroidery, or quaint adornments of flowers—although she had not done so for months past—yet she seemed to grow more serious.

‘Then you are going to marry an English girl,’ she said, after a few minutes of silence.

‘No, I am not going to marry anyone,’ he said quickly. But it was the only time he spoke in haste. If she would have asked for anything, it would have made it easier to him to take leave of her. But she asked for nothing. Had he not always treated her kindly? She had implicit confidence in him—poor little Szechuan slave-girl that had been! who had never felt, never would feel, the slightest inclination to vice, the innocent victim of circumstances, if ever such were, sold after a great flood by parents who had lost their all, brought up in a den of infamy, and then sold out of it to the hated foreigner, whom she as a Chinese girl naturally regarded in the first instance as an inexpressibly repulsive ogre, but whom for an ogre she had found always kindly. The possibility of his loving her or her loving him had never entered her Chinese imagination, so she had never felt the miss of it. But after all there is a touch of common humanity runs through us all. And she stood looking after him with sorrowful eyes as he went away, their baby in her arms, their boy clinging to her skirts. The boy had tried Claude Fortescue the most, for in spite of his square head and furtive Chinese eyes, the boy evidently loved him, loved to stroke his hand, and longed to be himself caressed. And his father shrank from paining him, yet could hardly bear the touch of his soft taper Chinese fingers, could not look him in the face, with his Fortescue mouth and Chinese-shaped head and eyes and Chinese yellow complexion.

He had meant to tell their mother that he would remove the children from her keeping for a better education as they grew older; but as he saw them so evidently mothered by her, and clinging to her as their mother, he wondered what right he himself had to do this. What gave him the authority to dispose any further of their lives, or hers? He believed not even law. And as he puzzled over it all, how best to straighten the tangled skein, he began to wish to know what was usually done, what other people thought right. Usually Claude Fortescue did not trouble himself much about this. He was accustomed to think out questions of right and wrong for himself. But just now to do so seemed beyond his powers.

Then to whom should he apply ? And then, curiously enough, he felt instinctively that any man who had acted like himself must have had his understanding thereby darkened, and that therefore it would be of no use applying to such a one. But he remembered an erudite Chinese scholar with whom he had more than once come in contact at the Asiatic Society, and for some time carried on a correspondence—a missionary of learning. He thought he would ask him. And he did so, stating the case very plainly. The Doctor looked up from a table covered with Chinese dictionaries, a medley of Stent, Morrison, Wells Williams, and Kang-Hi :

‘Of course a deed once done always remains.’

‘Of course,’ said Claude Fortescue. ‘I do not ask you to help me to undo the past. And yet, pardon me for one instant. Does the Christian religion not believe in the cleansing of the heart ? Does it set bounds to the power of repentance ?’

Thus speaking, Claude Fortescue so resembled the pictures some artists have painted of Jesus mourning over the sins of the world—they never having seen a man without sins of his own to mourn over, and thus having given rather this expression than the other to the Lord of Light and Life—that the learned doctor paused, surprised by a likeness that had more than once struck some of Fortescue’s most intimate friends.

‘We can all “rise on stepping stones of our dead selves to higher things,”’ said he musingly. ‘But the consequences of the deed remain. There are the children. There is their mother——’

‘Is her position now not after all incomparably better than what it would have been had she never known me ?’

‘My dear sir, judging from what I have heard, which is not much, I admit—but judging from what I have heard, she would have been dead by now.’

Claude Fortescue drew a quick breath that sounded almost like a sob. He put his hand to his forehead, as if it pained him. ‘Well, then——’

‘Pardon me, that is not all. And whatever her position is now, it strikes me—it strikes me, an old man, as an unutterably sad one. I stand now alone in the world at seventy-two, but I have a long life of love and joy to look back upon. And I have my God ! She stands equally alone, and without God, and that at nineteen or twenty probably. But that is not the point that most matters. Have you ever considered how many wretched victims were bought with the price you

paid for her—what an impetus was thereby given to the trade in victims for the gratification of men's lusts—a trade that will never be stopped, nor even sensibly checked, except by a diminution in the number of buyers? As long as the world lasts there will always be some girls more friendless and alone, or with parents more careless or depraved. The whole burden of this great misery rests with us men, it does not rest with the wretched traders in vice on whom men relieve themselves by heaping terms of opprobrium. I tell you there will always be slaves to be got somehow as long as a slave market exists.'

And the Doctor leant back in his chair, the tips of his fingers pressed against one another, and looked at his visitor as if ready, even eager, for a fierce argument. But Claude Fortescue was not ready. To him the question was personal, not general. And the disputatious Doctor pulled himself together.

'But you called to consult me about your children. In such cases I do not recommend taking them from the mother.'

'You do not?' There was a faint sigh of relief.

'No, I do not. I know some people do. But I often question the right. She is a quiet, well-conducted woman, by your account. Of course it is subject to that. All children are the better for mother love—especially when they miss that of a father,' added the relentless doctor. But his visitor's face showed such unmixed suffering, he thought he would refrain from further side thrusts. 'What I should recommend is that you should appoint some guardian to look after the children's interests, *and* the mother's, and to report to you if necessary. I do not hold, you see, that you should ever be relieved from all care in the matter, either by any society, person, or in any way whatsoever. But as it is inexpedient that you should hold further intercourse with the mother, if for no other reason, for your good repute in the world's eyes, and as we do not consider it right to remove the children from their mother, it is advisable there should be some intermediary. I would offer to serve as such myself were it not for my advanced years. As it is I would venture to suggest—you are a Churchman, I imagine?'

'I was brought up as such,' said Claude Fortescue faintly. This practical, business-like discussion was too much for him.

The old Doctor looked at him sharply for a moment or two. 'But you do not know the clergyman here?' Then as the

other nodded his head in sign he did not, 'Perhaps I had better inquire, and see if I can find some one suitable for the office of guardian. And till I do, if you wish it, I will undertake the position myself. Perhaps it will be better, for the present at all events. After all, people talk.'

'That does not at all matter,' said Claude Fortescue firmly.

'Do you wish the children known as yours, then? Better not!' said the Doctor. 'Believe me, it will be better not. Five years hence will be quite time enough to acknowledge them if you wish to do so. Trust an old man who has seen more of the world than you have. You do not yet know what life has in store for you, nor what difficulties you may not be laying up for yourself. You did not consider then, when you took this girl to live with you, *or you would not have done it*. Do not take another hasty, ill-advised step, involving so much more than it is possible beforehand to calculate.' Then they began to discuss financial arrangements, and here again the Doctor surprised Mr. Fortescue by always reducing the sums he set aside. 'I am not considering your salary, nor that you have few claims upon you. I am only considering what is best for this poor girl to keep her in a position of comfort, and yet not expose her as a prey to money hunters. Invest your money, if you are at a loss what to do with it now, for the good of your children, should you feel disposed eventually to give them a European education. It takes very little to bring them up as Chinese. You are wanting to compensate by giving money, but money does not atone for want of love.'

Then as they parted, and the old man held out his hand to say good-bye, 'You are about to be married, I suppose?' he said.

'No, no!' cried Claude Fortescue, 'I shall never marry now,' and his expression of agony was so intense that the old man almost involuntarily said, 'I beg your pardon.'

Then the Doctor went back to his study of the Gospel, which he was trying to render into classical Chinese for the use of literati, with a greatly saddened heart. 'A bruised reed shalt thou not break,' he murmured to himself. 'Why am I always so hot and hasty? Even at seventy-two never cured yet of my old sin of hastiness! I took for granted he only came to me because he wanted to be married and to be freed from all sense of responsibility like the rest of them,

and yet had some conscience left ! If I had but tried to pour balm upon the wounded spirit ! Oh ! if I had but spoken differently !'

But it mattered very little to Claude Fortescue how the old Doctor had spoken to him. He had wanted help for future guidance. But he did not care how any other man judged what lay behind him in the past. He judged of that for himself now, best knowing himself from what he had fallen away, and how wilfully. And as he walked slowly along the Bund now, his eyes fixed upon the ground as if he were counting the pebbles, he decided that the old Doctor's proposed arrangement was the best he could make, not to undo the past but to make provision for the future. Then the old man's question as to whether he was a Churchman recurred to his mind, and he remembered it was Sunday, and he thought he would go to church and see once again how it all struck him now.

The evening service in Shanghai Cathedral was at that time very elaborate in its musical arrangements, as if trying to make up by the variety of its tunes for the scantiness of the worshippers. The words of the Church of England service are very impressive, but, as with Shakespeare, the art of delivering them so that they may be heard seems to have gone out. Claude Fortescue felt depressed, bored if anything, rather than revived by the dull droning, no sentence completely heard, and the tunes not such as he was accustomed to associate with the words. 'Home, sweet Home,' sung to the tune of 'God save the Queen,' would have more an irritating than a pathetic effect. And his ear was also far too delicately attuned not to be arrested by every shortcoming of the choir. There seemed no opening left for soul food anywhere. But when the anthem came, and one sweet voice took a solo, and for a while filled the church unaided, he was for the first time carried somewhat out of himself. He looked up, and, his eyes resting upon a distant object, it was only as the solo died away he became aware that his eyes were resting on a pale face almost effaced by the shadow of a distant pillar, and with an upward-turned, rapt expression such as he had never seen upon it before, yet surely the face of Lilian Grey ! The whole cathedral seemed to turn round with him for a moment. He touched his hand against the seat in front of him and looked round about him to make quite sure that he was not dreaming, had not conjured the face out of his own mental preoccupa-



tion. No, he was awake ! They were all there still, the other worshippers scattered sparsely among the empty seats round about him, and in a far corner, so shadowed by that pillar he could not be sure, a figure in white with a face like that of Lilian Grey ! It was no mere fancy, no hallucination of the brain. But afterwards, when the service was over, no girl in white came down that side aisle. He waited outside under the light of the lamps till the last of the congregation had disappeared. Then only he remembered how often women threw some light cloak or wrap round them in the evening, and told himself that in this way the white-clad figure must have passed by him. But it was inconceivable to him that he should not have recognised Lilian Grey however cloaked. And, besides, did he not know that she had left in the last mail—had received his telegram and said she could not understand it ? He told himself the likeness had been his fancy. Anyway the feeling it had given him was the only feeling he carried away with him from the Shanghai Cathedral. And it was one of deep unrest.

He shut himself into his room and sat there, his elbows resting on the table, his face pressed into his hands. And then some of the old Doctor's words came back to him, and stung him like scourges, till he writhed under them. Meanwhile the old man was on his knees asking forgiveness for his harshness. But that made no difference in Claude Fortescue's suffering.

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## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE GARDENS BY THE RIVER

Ask nothing more of me, sweet ;  
All I can give you I give.  
Heart of my heart, were it more,  
More would be laid at your feet.

SWINEBURNE.

THE one great beauty of Shanghai is its Bund with trees and grass plats between the stately foreign hong's and the river—not the great river Yangtsze, upon which everyone in Europe fancies it is situated, but the little river Whangpoo, that is fast silting up, and only flows into the Yangtsze across a bar

that is a great hindrance to its traffic, and, if not removed, a growing menace to the prosperity of the commercial metropolis of the East. But the loveliest part of the Bund is the garden by the river, where children play in crowds, surrounded by a wealth of flowers, and grown-up people listen to the strains of a band of Manilla men, whilst watching the great ocean steamers go by almost within hand touch, or the picturesque junks with their tawny sails, the two-eyed sampans, and all the rest of the multifarious river traffic; sometimes a floating haystack, sometimes a smart white man-of-war, mixed up with all the flowers of each succeeding season. Only in the very height of summer there are no flowers. Then, too, it is too hot to go into the gardens till the sunset tints are there, and after that everyone lies about in long chairs sent down for the purpose, gigantic human flowers in all sorts of colours, till far into the night, when the music has finished and the lights gone out, all but the great white electric light, and attendant coolies, lurking till then unseen in dark corners, come to carry away again the aforesaid long chairs. People who have not been in the East would call them sofas made of basket work.

But before the height of summer the gardens are perhaps at their loveliest, when first the hyacinths like fairies fill the borders, together with large velvety pansies, golden and red tulips following close upon them. Then comes the season of the cinerarias and gloxinias, and after that roses run riot over the gardens in wild, prodigal profusion—alas! too brief. Almost before one has settled down to enjoy them, they are gone, to be succeeded by great tree magnolias, covered with creamy, fragrant blossoms, and oleanders, rosy and sweet-scented. But it was the season when the chrysanthemums were coming on, although they had not yet acquired quite flower-show dimensions, when Claude Fortescue passed into the gardens. He had gone there to think. It was his duty to write to Lilian Grey, he felt that. Hitherto, he saw now, he had thought but of himself: how well it would be for him to marry her, and whether the supreme good of it justified his un-desert in so far aspiring. But he knew now that he owed it to the girl, on whom he had poured forth all the love he had to give, to tell her that he had done so. Yet it was a difficult letter to write. To make an offer of marriage, that was an unmistakable, undoubted offer, and yet without the slightest hope even of acceptance! For that he could not

bring himself to entertain now. To advise her as to her future life, without the slightest right to advise further than that which love gives! For himself he was perfectly hopeless. For her all he dared to wish now was, that whatever path in life she might choose, she might choose it cheered by the consciousness of the heartfelt love of her childhood's friend, in no case pained by the idea that she had given her own affection unsought. For he remembered that self-betraying glance that had cost Lilian herself such agonies of shame, and he feared—yes, feared was the word he used to himself—that he had touched her girlish fancy. How long that might have lasted, how far it might have withstood his subsequent neglect, he did not know. Judging by her refusal to be moved by his telegram, it seemed it had not withstood it. Yet he felt that he owed it to her to write. And Claude Fortescue, who had so long neglected every duty, was now resolute to fulfil every iota that suggested itself. So now he sought counsel among the flowers. But the chrysanthemums gave him none, with their arrogant flares of colour, or even more repellent stainless white clusters of blossom. He watched a junk go by, almost touching the foreshore as the tawny sails on its three masts filled with the breeze. 'Freighted with Curses,' he thought the picture would be called if framed and hung in the Academy. 'It is over! It is over!' that tawny, swift-moving boat, rushing on to its destination, seemed to say. 'It might have been! but——' and it was gone. He walked swiftly through the garden, with its amahs and children—Eurasian children with their yellow, mongrel faces; Jewish children with magnificent velvety eyes that seemed to have absorbed the sunshine of generations; English children with pale, fair faces, and peaky chins; Scandinavian children with fair hair like a halo in the sunshine, and glad, confident blue eyes, that looked out fearless on that and everything, till one wondered how the spiritless Eurasians ever dared even to roll a hoop in the presence of these little descendants of fierce Vikings.

He went on, ever seeking a quiet place for thought, into the second garden across the road, and there paused by the half-open door of the large conservatory. That surely would be deserted at this sunset hour. A sweet fragrance stole out upon the evening, a fragrance mingled of heliotrope and *mignonette*. A white camellia bush covered with frail fair blossoms seemed to invite approach, whilst his eyes rested with

satisfaction upon the exquisite massing of colours in a mixed bank of flowers beneath it leading up to it.

'I think that you are making a great mistake—a very great mistake,' an old man's voice was saying at the other end of the conservatory.

And low but very clear tones answered with that exquisite articulation that surely but one woman in the world possessed, 'I have thought lately sometimes that so far I have been too much afraid of making a mistake. Is it not better, perhaps, even to make a mistake than to stand for ever trembling on the brink of a decision?'

As she spoke he stepped forward, and as she finished speaking their eyes met. There was a moment's hesitation. Then the girl said, speaking yet lower than before, as if suddenly tired out, too tired almost to speak, 'Dr. Donaldson was, like you, asking me to reconsider my decision as to becoming a medical missionary.'

Claude Fortescue's eyes were fixed on her face, absolutely devouring the curve of her cheek, the delicate droop of her neck, as her eyes involuntarily sought the ground. He spoke hotly, impetuously, as if not understanding what she had said to him, 'How is it that you are here? I thought you had left China for ever—by the last mail.'

'It was French. I could not travel on from Marseilles by myself,' said Lilian simply.

'But the Miss Grey who left—who got my telegram?'

'There was a Miss Grey, I know—a globe trotter, I think. But did you telegraph? Did she get your telegram?' She spoke very slowly, as if wondering, and pausing between each sentence.

The old Doctor, for it was he who was her companion, had stood looking from one to the other; and now the old man, who even at seventy-two had never yet cured himself of being hasty, spoke quickly: 'Since you have met a friend, Miss Grey, will you excuse my seeing you home? I have got some matters I really ought to attend to. And I am sure Mr. Fortescue will see you safe. Will this be agreeable to you, Mr. Fortescue? Miss Grey would like to walk round the gardens and see the flowers, and I—I am an old man, and I have so little time left now.' He went away muttering to himself, and wondering a little whether he had done right, and what they would think of his going. But they never thought of it at all, nor noticed that he had left them. If he had dis-

appeared into thin air instead of striding over the garden bridge with his white-covered umbrella under his arm, it would have been quite the same to them.

'I never thought of there being another Miss Grey,' said Claude Fortescue—very simple words in themselves, but meaning much as he paused after saying them.

'Why did you telegraph?' asked Lilian abruptly, looking up at him now, then looking quickly away as she found his eyes fixed still on her face as if unable too thoroughly to assure himself that it was really she herself who was there standing before him.

A poinsettia spread its coronal of richest scarlet and gold over her, and a white camellia stood behind, whilst all the air round was sweet with the scent of mignonette. He saw her face outlined fair against the fair white camellia blossoms, as he answered with equal directness, 'Because I wanted to see you before you left China. There is so much I have to say to you.'

'Do not say it now, then,' pleaded Lilian, a slight tremor passing over her. 'Not here—beside these flowers. In the other garden there are seats. It is so much better to sit down and talk when one has anything to say. But here—look at these dear old friends!' She was very pale and evidently nervous, but she tried her best to look up and smile.

Her evident agitation forced him to put a constraint upon himself for her sake. 'Do you remember the heliotrope in the old garden in Northampton?' he asked tenderly. 'Are you still as fond of it as you used to be? It is forbidden, I know, but there is such a wealth of it here,' and he gathered a piece and held it out to her.

Twice Lilian held out her hand to take it, and twice she drew it back. 'Forgive me, but I cannot,' she said falteringly.

Then, as he looked at her wondering, 'Are stolen apples not sweet?'

'Not to me,' said she with a slight shudder. 'I could not take anything that was the least wrong from your hand.'

'Let us bury it, then!' said Claude Fortescue, trying to speak lightly, but with a sudden strange tightening at the heart. And he noticed a little sadly that she would not even touch it to bury it. 'Are you in everything so severe?'

'You see I was so lately a child,' pleaded Lilian. '*Please* forgive me. But I could not have listened to you with that bit of heliotrope in my hand. And I could not have thrown

away what you had given me,' she added with a sudden smile.

'Could you not, Lilian?' in a softer voice. She looked up quickly, almost sternly as he thought, as he called her by her name. 'Have I lost all right to call you by your name? I have always thought of you in that way. And surely I used to call you by it in the old days. Have you forgotten those old days at Northampton?'

'I have forgotten nothing,' said she sadly.

They had found a seat now fronting the river and the boats, and he motioned to her to sit down; then, as the sea breeze came softly into their faces, looked with a little apprehension to see if she were warmly enough dressed. 'Will you knot your little handkerchief round your throat once more?' he asked in a strange tone. 'Remember, I do not give it, though. It is only lent.'

'What! my little faded handkerchief!' exclaimed the girl, almost crying now. 'Oh! it makes me think of Gardie so, and everything. But you have not carried it about with you all this time?'

'I have not always carried it in my pocket,' he replied evasively.

'But you did not know you would meet me here to-day?' asked the girl eagerly. 'You did not put it there on purpose?'

'No, indeed,' said he quickly. Then, in those tender tones of explanation no one else had ever heard from him—a man who had of old rather piqued himself upon owing no man an explanation of his conduct—'I wanted to write to you. And I thought perhaps it might help me to know what to say.' She was looking out across the river now with a fixed, troubled expression. 'You must have wondered very often I did not write to you sooner,' he continued. 'When I first left England, it was because, as you said just now, I trembled on the brink of a decision.' She looked round at him quickly, and the expression of her eyes almost unnerved him, but he went on hurriedly: 'Not that I have ever doubted from the first moment I knew you, Lilian, that you were the only woman who could ever be my wife. But I doubted if I dared to ask you to be so.'

An expression of great distress on Lilian's face, staring fixedly down the river.

He reached out and took her hand in his, as if to comfort

her. 'You have known, you must have known, Lilian, how much I loved you?'

This time he seemed to insist upon an answer, and she answered meekly, but very low, as if she had hardly strength to speak, 'Yes, I have known.'

'And now I think it would have been better to have made a mistake, if it were a mistake,' said he, smiling down on the little pale, anguished face, that seemed unable to look up or take courage. 'Somebody says it is when a man finds himself unfit to guide his own bark through life, that he asks some one else to get into the same boat with him. And if having made a thorough mess of life is a qualification, I am certainly qualified.'

'You want some one else to steer you?' asked Lilian doubtfully.

'Nay, rather I want the sense of responsibility of having some one else to care for.'

'Do you remember that girl dear Gardie used to see after?' asked Lilian, with a sudden smile, 'whose mother was a drunken woman, and in the workhouse? And the girl used to save up all her money to take presents to her mother, and be so good and steady, all to be a credit to her. Then one day the mother died. And from that time the girl never had any money, and got into trouble in every way till Gardie did not know what to do for her. I remember you said then it was quite natural—she had no one to be responsible for.'

'Did I? I have forgotten,' said he, looking delightedly at the returning colour in her cheeks, as she leant back in her seat and spoke like herself, no longer in those unnaturally low, strained tones.

'It seems to me you are asking me to play the part of the drunken mother,' cried Lilian, and laughed.

Then he laughed too, and the terrible state of tension between them was over for the moment. But the sun had set, and the evening breeze was blowing cooler now.

'I am afraid of your getting a chill,' said Claude Fortescue. 'Let us walk about a little. This climate is so treacherous. Have you been well in China? You look so white.'

'I was always white,' said Lilian quietly.

'No, no! You had a soft colour like peach blossom, or the inside of a shell, or the last ray of the sun on the curl of a wave. I miss the colour, as I miss the dear old flapping hat.'

He had often teased her about the flapping hat that used to hide so much of the face he loved to look upon, and he had quickly noticed that at each allusion to the past something of the barrier between them seemed to fall away and Lilian to grow nearer to him. But she still seemed somewhat unbending and far away, though she smiled now as she replied, 'Flapping hats are all very well for the sun of England, but in China they are no use. Do you know I am very much afraid I am like my poor old flapping hat?'

'How so? Are you no use in China?'

'None!' said Lilian very sadly. 'That is why I thought of studying medicine; for I know nothing by which I can be useful out here. I have tried to see China through your eyes,' she added pleadingly, looking up at him for one short second, 'but it seems all too large.'

'You have tried to see it through my eyes!' he exclaimed, the sweetness of the words that had, as it were, escaped her almost intoxicating him for the moment. 'Then you do love me a little, Lilian?'

'You know that I love you,' said she quite sedately. 'Are you not asking me to marry you—out of pity?'

'Out of pity!' The idea was so startling to Claude Fortescue he could not receive it at once. 'Out of pity, Lilian! I to pity you!'

'I thought so,' said the girl, looking at him quite in her old childlike way now—trusting, appealing. 'You waited till you heard I was going away—that I was going to be a medical missionary. You thought that dreadful—I knew you would. You were sorry for me then. You left that woman——' She paused, terrified by his expression. 'Mrs. Robinson—they said you were always with her—that—that——' For the first time the girl flushed crimson, and was unable to finish her sentence.

'Mrs. Robinson!' was all Claude Fortescue said; but the tone in which he said it at once blotted out all recollection of the dreadful things she had heard, that had transformed her during their last interview, and preyed upon her mind ever since.

'But it was only then you asked me to be—your "drunken mother,"' she said, half laughing, half crying. 'Of course I know it is very good of you, and I am very grateful——'

'Lilian, do you know that I worship the very ground you tread on, that you have never been out of my mind day nor



night, that I have thought of you, and loved you, and longed for your dear presence——’ He paused, shocked himself at the strength of his own language, which did not seem at all too strong for the facts of the case, but yet seemed so out of character for a man who had striven to school himself in the teachings of the ideal Lao-tsze—knew by heart the maxims of Confucius, that master of propriety.

The girl clasped her hands together nervously. ‘But you never said so, you never asked me, when I met you in the Niukan Gorge.’

‘I was out of my mind, I believe; but if I tell you the truth, it was with thinking of you—always of you,’ he repeated drearily. ‘And it was all I could do to prevent myself from taking you in my arms, and springing into the river with you, and so ending it all,’ he added, and drew her nearer to him as he spoke.

‘You do not want to spring into the river now?’ she asked, yet almost leant against him as she asked it, as if to say, ‘If you do, then together!’

‘I was almost out of my mind then, I tell you. I think now I had been almost out of my mind for a long while. I had thought of you so long and so often, my darling, my Lilian! I was thinking of you then, when you appeared to me like a vision. And I took you for your ghost.’

She laid her hand upon his arm, looking into his face with tenderly anxious eye. ‘Do not think of that time. It is not good for you. I will never ask you again. It is enough for me that you say you love me.’ Then in a lower voice, ‘I know that if you had been out of your mind, really, you would try to convince me that you had not. So I am not frightened; but you must never look like that again—never.’

‘And you consent to become my wife?’ he asked, taking both her hands in his, and looking down into her face. ‘May God forgive me, Lilian, if I ever give you cause to repent this hour!’ He spoke solemnly, looking up to heaven as he spoke.

‘How should I ever repent it?’ said the girl, with pure, earnest eyes lifted to his. ‘Can one ever repent where there has been no sin?’

The suffering look came over his face that Dr. Donaldson had noticed, and Lilian, too, was struck by the likeness. Softly—very softly—she pressed his right hand between

both hers. 'Whatever troubles you, let me help you to bear it. I do not ask to understand what it is. Perhaps I could not. But let me help you to bear what grieves you.'

The garden was deserted now, darkness settling down over it, and in the shadow of the night he raised her hand to his lips. His heart was too full for words. But he dared not kiss her yet. To Lilian it would have seemed more natural if he had. She was so little more than a child even yet.

How sympathetic the chrysanthemums looked now holding up their heads so proudly—'He has won her! He has won her!'—all dressed out in crimson and gold, dusky red, and blushing pink, as if for a high festival, or, best of all, in bridal white, shining like silver under the electric lamps. The water plashed against the shore, and all nature seemed to rejoice with them, and to be at peace.

## CHAPTER XXV

### DR. DONALDSON'S APPEAL

For all so surely as *in principio*  
*Mulier est hominis confusio.*

Madam, the sentence of this Latin is,  
 'Woman is mannes joy and mannes bliss.'

CHAUCER.

'SOMETHING ought to be done. Why not have a regiment or two up from Hong Kong?'

'But where would you send them? No, I think the volunteers——'

'I take the view of that letter to the morning paper. We should occupy the forts at Woosing, and hold Shanghai in trust. But with such a minister——'

'Certainly ministers ought not to look on like crocodiles, with their hands in their breeches pockets, doing nothing.'

'Ha! ha! ha! Ha! ha! ha!' They all laughed.

The scene was that usual gathering place of Shanghai's commercial brain, the Club bar; the hour twelve o'clock.

'Very good indeed, Cunningham!' said the broker we met of old.

'Since I am so much appreciated, I must own I am not

original,' said Mr. Cunningham, a slight, spare man with dark eyes, and an expression of great concentration. He was one of the largest tea-buyers, but did general business as well. 'I was quoting Lord Castlereagh somewhere near the beginning of this century. It seems our English representative at Peking is not without a precedent.'

'But what I am saying is, the Ko Lao Hui, whether or no they are at the bottom of all these riots, are not a secret society properly so called?' another man was now heard asserting. 'My comprador tells me "nothing of the sort," and that Li Hung Chang himself is at the head of them.'

'Oh, Li! You might as well say the Empress whilst you are about it.'

'I don't suppose the rules of the society admit women, but——'

'What I say is,' said the broker, 'something should be done.' He was standing in his favourite attitude, one hand supporting his very short coat-tails, the other lifting a glass to his lips, his hat well on one side. They all wore their hats cocked just then, for though there were riots Shanghai was looking forward just then to making its fortune by the Sheridan Mine. It was in Colorado, some way off, it is true; but Shanghai had put all its spare cash into it, for it knew the difficulty about making money in China, it did not know what difficulties might yet arise in Colorado, and it was hopeful. 'Why, here is one of these merry-andrews come back again,' as a familiar grey pongee suit, grey hat with gauze puggaree, and this time a white rosebud in its button-hole, appeared in the Club precincts. 'Worn that coat ever since we last saw you, my boy? By the way, does anyone know who is being married at the Cathedral this morning? Seemed to be something on as I passed by.'

'There is indeed,' said the last comer. 'And it is the oddest story. You know Clarke?'

'What Clarke?'

'Not Clarke!'

'Never Clarke!' arose in chorus all round. For everyone knew Clarke, of the other pongee suit.

'Well, we were travelling home together all right, when in the sleeping cars one morning there was a widow, or rather a brace of widows. One was enumerating all her admirers to the other. You know the clear down-East tones? They penetrate! Well, just as she had arrived at Fat Tom of

Tacoma, the coloured man wanted to take the beds to pieces. The ladies got up in a great hurry, and the story was interrupted. But as luck would have it, Clarke and I found ourselves at the same table just opposite, so I couldn't help it, I said: "We were so sorry you were interrupted just now, my friend and I. We are longing to hear more of Fat Tom of Tacoma."

'You didn't!'

'No, did you really, though?'

'Oh, law!' They were all fit to split their sides with laughing, and several men were holding themselves together, for, as Mrs. Poyser says, it is a small joke sets men laughing, when they sit staring at one another, each a pipe in his mouth. And it is a smaller when they stand round a club bar.'

'Well, that led to an acquaintance. She was the most appalling woman, I thought. But Clarke talked away to her. And I made up to the other—a very nice sort for a widow. When we got to Port Arthur it is true Clarke gave me the slip. He went down the lakes by steamer with the ladies. I was surprised, for we had been sharing a compartment in the sleeping car. But he turned up all right in Montreal, expressed himself just as I did about the widow, sure her black hair was a wig she took for travelling, and laughed over "Fat Tom of Tacoma" and all. But from that day he began to get telegrams about green tea. He always said it was green tea, and the season promised to be such a peculiar one—fact is, we thought we'd better both come out. You see for the first time in our lives we took diametrically different views—on the strength of Clarke's telegrams, let me tell you. We agreed to dissolve partnership, and that was pretty well the only matter we did agree about by the time we got back to Japan. Well, the long and the short of it is, Clarke's going into another partnership. His green tea telegrams were all gammon. The widow turned up the day after we arrived. And, to let the cat out of the bag, I've just been best man, though I don't suppose I look much like it. I'd have dressed differently if I'd known. As it was, only time to button-hole a white rose.'

But none could listen any longer to his lamentations over his *mal-à-propos* toilette. They laughed till the tears ran down their cheeks, whilst the tea men pleaded piteously to be told what was supposed to have been in those green tea telegrams. It was the merriest club gathering there had been

for a long while, and only began to break up as the married men felt an urgent necessity to hurry home with this tit-bit of gossip to their wives.

'What's this about Kiukiang?' asked a late-comer, hurrying in excitedly.

'Oh, some trouble there, I suppose. They've got a French man-of-war, though. They are all right. Trust the Chinese for not doing anything when there's a man-of-war in port. It must have been a scene though, getting all the children out of the orphanage into the concession, with the Sisters of St. Vincent refusing to budge an inch till every child was safe, and the Commissioner and the captain of the man-of-war both imploring them to save themselves, and then having to bundle them into chairs at last with all the curtains drawn, and see them safe through the rioters.'

'What did the Commissioner interfere for?'

'Oh, he is French, and a Catholic, I suppose, energetic fellow too.'

'By the way, the Consul is ill, and if he has to come down, Fortescue is to go up,' said a young man from the Consulate.

'Fortescue! Hem! Ha! I wonder how he'd come out in a riot.'

'Why, he is one of our best men—a splendid fellow.'

'Too much Chinese tomfoolery.'

'I think that falls away under the pressure of any great excitement,' said Mr. Cunningham. 'It is only the icing on the plum-cake, and then the natural man comes out. By the way, what a wonderfully plucky thing it was of that American missionary defending the Nankin Hospital single-handed. I met him yesterday, and he seems all to pieces with the strain now. But he kept the mob at bay for two whole hours before any assistance came, just pointing a revolver and threatening to shoot the first man who came on. He told me a man had fallen across him, and made a natural barricade, otherwise he could not have done it. I must say the Americans have come out well in these riots; they seem to take naturally to defending themselves.'

'More used to carrying revolvers than we are, I fancy.'

'But what made him defend the hospital? Awfully stupid thing to do, I think. If the Chinese burnt it they'd be sure to pay more than it cost. I must say for them they pay up handsomely.'

‘Yes, and a great pity it is, I think, the European Governments ever condescended to take money compensation. I heard that fool Jones arguing the other day there ought to be fixed prices agreed upon for everything beforehand *à propos* of those two poor fellows killed at Wusüeh, so much per head for the life of a British subject. The Chief Justice shut him up splendidly. “Well, and how much will you consider satisfactory compensation for the murder of Mrs. Jones?” he asked, coming down upon him like a sledge hammer. I never saw a fellow look so flat.’

‘There was only too good reason for defending the hospital at Nankin,’ here interposed Mr. Cunningham. ‘They had been imprudent enough to get up a skeleton for the purpose of teaching the students anatomy. And should the infuriated mob once have seen that it would have given such an impetus to the stories about taking out children’s eyes and cutting up dead bodies as we’d none of us live to see the end of. This fellow saw his wife off safe to join the other ladies, and then he thought of the skeleton, and just ran round to the hospital as hard as he could split. But he had to stand there on guard two mortal hours before the mandarin sent any Chinese soldiers. And defending the place all alone for that length of time I call magnificent. He ought to have a testimonial or a medal.’

‘So he ought.’

They all said so at the time ; but events hurry one on the top of the other so rapidly in China, or else it is they are so unforeseen and consequently startling, that whatever happens seems to blot out the memory of all that has gone before.

Even the Sisters of St. Vincent at the hospital were all reading the papers now for the first time since they had joined the Order. Things had come to such a pass that even their rule was relaxed. ‘It is about ourselves now,’ they said, and read the papers straight through from beginning to end. If newspapers had many such readers it would be worth while being a writer. Everyone who could was leaving the one large hotel in the French concession, it being generally understood that the anger of whoever was getting up these riots—who that was is so far still a mystery—was specially directed against the French more than any other nationality. A lady who arrived at Shanghai just then could get no coolie on the Bund to lay a hand on her boxes because it was believed she was French. And more than once a day was publicly

announced for an attack upon the French concession. All the other riots had been formally announced beforehand, only people had not believed in the announcements. But now among the numbers in Shanghai there were many who thought they would be beforehand, and to everyone it seemed well to take some precautions. Men who had lived happy for years in the protection of rifle or revolver suddenly discovered now that all those years they had never had a cartridge to fit them, and several of those who had houses at some distance in the country moved into the settlement.

Dr. Donaldson was hurrying along in a jinricksha to remonstrate with the American ladies attached to the women's hospital, who in spite of their outlying and exposed situation—even beyond the French concession—refused to come in like other people, when on his way he caught sight of Claude Fortescue. He stopped his jinricksha.

'I am very glad to have this opportunity of speaking to you,' said Mr. Fortescue, broaching the subject at once with that determination that was new to him. 'You must be thinking I did not tell you the truth the other day.

'No, I understand—I understand,' said the impetuous Doctor, brushing that part of the subject away with a wave of his hand. 'You thought that Miss Grey had left China. But what is of more consequence—what I stopped you to ask—is, have you told her the truth? And the Doctor looked at him.

Claude Fortescue's face grew hard under that glance. 'What truth?' he asked.

'Why, that besides a possible income of so much—a salary of so much—no fixed home—the possibility of being ordered anywhere in China any day, you have also two children. It is facts like these a woman——'

'I think it quite unnecessary to mention anything of all this to Miss Grey,' said Mr. Fortescue stiffly.

'Tell her now,' continued the Doctor, with uplifted forefinger, 'and it may sadden her, make her think of you rather differently. But she would accept your judgment with unwavering confidence, feel sure that the course of action you proposed must be the right course. She is a good girl—a truly good girl—but it would never lead her to break off her engagement to you, as an elder woman might—at least I think not,' said the old man, suddenly qualifying his authoritative utterance, 'She is barely more than a child yet after

all, and the idea that she herself should form an independent judgment upon matters till now undreamt of would not enter her head, I fancy, any more than that anyone should ever intend any line of conduct but the highest. To think otherwise would be outside the plane of her ideas, as I think.'

'Another man might tell the girl he wished to marry——', said Claude Fortescue, then broke off. To him the idea was utterly abhorrent, and he had only forced himself to listen by an effort. Because he had degraded himself, was he to sully her pure soul? Nay! that sorrow he must for ever bear by himself unaided.

'Think! Your happiness would be safe then,' pleaded the aged minister. 'Consider how many people know your secret. Does your wife deserve that she should be left in a position so precarious, liable at any moment to hear that about you that must so deeply affect her—must, if kept back from her till after marriage, for ever alter the whole tenour of her thoughts about you?' He added this last as he saw he had not yet carried conviction into his hearer's soul.

Claude Fortescue raised his head. 'Lilian trusts me,' he said.

'The more reason not to abuse her confidence. It is not fair by her, I tell you. You are attempting to marry her under a deception. Come—shall I tell her?'

'No, I forbid you. What I told you in confidence!——' Claude Fortescue looked beside himself, defying the whole world.

Dr. Donaldson laid his hand upon his shoulder. 'And, therefore, without your permission, will never be divulged. You can at least rest assured of that—as far as I am concerned. But think how many people must know—ship captains probably, the greatest gossips in China—people who will in all probability be in daily intercourse with your wife, your boy, your cook, your ——'

'They would never tell her.'

'They may not tell her, perhaps. But do you allow nothing for a woman's instinct?' asked the old man with a wisdom begotten of his years, such as a man only attains to who has had daughters and been loved by them. 'May she not guess?'

'I must risk it,' said Claude Fortescue, and drew a deep breath, like a man recovering from a heavy blow. He looked quite resolute, however. Never for a second had a sign of faltering passed over his face. And the old Doctor saw the



case was hopeless. He had but discharged his own soul, it had been all in vain, and even then he could not help envying the man's absolute confidence in the girl's trust in him. He knew Lilian, and he could understand it. And he remembered his own youth of long ago, and sighed to think the past was past for him. For them it was all future yet.

'You are going to Kiukiang, I hear.

'Yes, if——'

'Ah, yes, if——' The Doctor nodded, got into his jinricksha again, and went his way. But the American lady missionaries would not move. They were not afraid, they said. It would be time enough to move when the Ko Lao Hui came, if there were any Ko Lao Hui. At all events, they said, they knew where the patients in their hospital were. They did not know where the Ko Lao Hui were, and they would at least remain where they were till they did.

'It seems no use advising people,' said the Doctor, 'but I have done my duty,' and diverged on the way back to return to his old favourite occupation, that of a colporteur. Standing at the corner of a crowded Chinese street offering books for sale, the venerable Doctor presented indeed a remarkable appearance, with his, amongst Chinese, gigantic stature, strongly marked Scotch features, and abundant flowing locks of iron-grey. Many a Chinese shopkeeper of satin gown and handsomely rounded paunch, as they esteem it, paused on his way to hold converse with the foreign ascetic, as he deemed him, who was so far better read in Confucian lore than himself, and yet for ever ready to confute Confucius out of what he called *the Book*. The Doctor's tracts were all soon sold, and the worthy Scotchman, whose length of limb and breadth of shoulder had been porridge-fed in Aberdeen, and who for stature and muscle and general Scotchness of feature needed not to fear comparison with any of his old associates beneath the crown of King's College, sat himself down sideways on a wheelbarrow, and let himself be comfortably trundled away from the Chinese city. But he hailed a jinricksha again as soon as he arrived where jinrickshas were possible; for a wheelbarrow, though too great a luxury for many of the roadless districts of China, looks somewhat primitive and grotesque in the Europeanised foreign settlement of Shanghai, with its foot-pavements, and electric lights, and carriages running swiftly and noiselessly upon light bicycle wheels, last touch of Chinese luxury.

## CHAPTER XXVI

MRS. FITZHUGH UNDER SAIL

Yet wedlock's a very awful thing !  
 'Tis something like that feat in the ring  
     Which requires good nerve to do it—  
 When one of a 'Grand Equestrian Troop'  
 Makes a jump at a gilded hoop,  
     Not certain at all  
     Of what may befall  
 After his getting through it !

TOM HOOD.

WHEN a man takes a great resolution, it seems to him as if there ought to come a lull even in the world's revolutions. He ought not, he thinks, at least for a time, to be buffeted by the winds and waves of life, for has he not formed a great resolution ? People ought to realise the solemn finality of an engagement to marry as they do of marriage itself. But, alas ! they do not. They never will, but rather, indeed, seem to think it an occasion for all coming forward at once like a swarm of gnats on a summer evening, and buzzing round remorselessly. There had been Dr. Donaldson already, and before Claude Fortescue had quite rallied from that, and got back into the she-is-everything-and-what-were-anything-without-her mood befitting a lover, in came Mrs. FitzHugh.

Mrs. FitzHugh was becoming a great person now. She had been steadily working with that one object in view, and when people steadily work at anything without a side glance at anything else it is astonishing what progress they make. Mrs. FitzHugh was getting on in society. She was the wife of a captain now. Captain FitzHugh got his promotion very shortly after his marriage ; whether, as people said, because even his Chinese employers were impressed by that, thinking that he must have great influence among the English to have such a wedding and get such grand presents, or whether because the merits, that through long years of patient toil had never been rewarded, were at last recognised ; anyhow, from a first officer upon the river he was suddenly promoted to be captain of one of the boats that run between Shanghai and Tientsin, calling at Chefoo *en route*. Chefoo is China's one sea bath, and till quite of late, since Japan has been opened out, the fashionable resort for Shanghai ladies and children. This

route therefore offered great possibilities. A good many ladies, who did not care for much travelling or who thought that Japan did not suit them, still continued to resort there. And it was by his wife's advice, and considerably owing to her help, that Captain FitzHugh's boat was already known as the one that kept the best table, and was consequently the favourite. Mrs. FitzHugh had also made two trips to Chefoo herself, at the right moment too, and Captain FitzHugh at his wife's instigation—he was in himself simply one of the most good-natured of men—had been always ready to give up his cabin to a leader of fashion either from Shanghai or the outports. Mrs. FitzHugh occupied a house now on the Bubbling Well Road, running due west of Shanghai, for everywhere, even in the farthest East, fashion moves westward ; she rarely now visited Honghew, the quarter where merchant captains' wives are supposed generally to reside, and to which merchant steamers whistle as they go in and out of port. She spoke with horror of the Broadway, barely acknowledging to knowing even the Japanese shops there, to which everyone was obliged to resort about Christmas time. But she had not yet become a member of the County Club. She was watching her opportunity, and this seemed now to have come to her when she saw Lilian Grey's name in the paper as having come down river. She called her 'that dear Lilian,' talked of how they had all come out from England together, of Miss Gardiner, who was aunt to Mr. Fortescue in the consular service, and in one way or another led people to suppose that they had all lived together at Northampton like one happy family, with herself, Mrs. FitzHugh, dropping in upon them from time to time like a good fairy, as she was dropping in upon them now to offer to be her chaperon, put her house at their disposition, or make herself otherwise useful, having just heard a vague rumour of the engagement. The quiet missionary couple, with whom Lilian had gone to stay in accordance with Mrs. Betterton's instructions, were quite extinguished by Mrs. FitzHugh when she sailed in upon them—not quite like a full-rigged ship under top-gallant sails, that was to come afterwards, but—with a generally all-embracing smile, and every possible elegant adjunct to a lady's toilette, a fan, a card case, a lace handkerchief, and a parasol. The card case was of Canton ivory, the fan was of sandalwood and scented all the house as she entered. But the handkerchief and parasol, though equally presents, did not date from the wedding festivities, and came

from London by way of Hall & Holtz's, that great Shanghai emporium, that rather recalls the Hudson Bay stores in Winnipeg and other cities out West, seeming equally too big for its surroundings. Mrs. FitzHugh gave a comprehensive glance all round, she smiled a specially all-embracing smile, then kissed Lilian effusively—'You dear, dear Lilian!'—murmuring between soft, warm kisses, 'So glad! so glad!' then turned, 'And my dear Mr. Fortescue, too! So it has all come right at last! I thought it would.'

'It!' and 'She had thought it would.' The woman was insufferable. But though Lilian saw at once he found her so, no one was less calculated to convey this to Mrs. FitzHugh than Claude Fortescue with his punctilious, old-school courtesy when not demoralised by Mrs. Robinson.

'And now you must let me arrange about the wedding for you and *everything*. You want to be relieved of *all* trouble? Of course you do! Let me give the breakfast and invite the guests.'

'But what guests? I know no one here,' said Lilian astonished.

'No, but Mr. Fortescue does. *Everyone* here knows Mr. Fortescue.'

'Do you want anyone asked—to anything?' asked Lilian, appealingly, of Claude Fortescue.

No! Mr. Fortescue decidedly did not. The idea of inviting anyone—to anything—had not occurred to him.

'But Shanghai loves a gay wedding,' pleaded Mrs. FitzHugh. 'I assure you it will be appreciated.'

'But why should we seek to please Shanghai just now?' asked Lilian, looking more and more indefinite and unapproachable. Even Mrs. FitzHugh could hardly have ventured to kiss her now.

'Are you not going to live here?'

'Am I?' asked Lilian, with just the faintest turn of an eyelid in Claude Fortescue's direction, yet hardly as inquiring of him.

He, however, hastened to explain, as if he were saying a lesson by rote, how he did not know where they might have to live, they could have no home, might be subject at any moment to orders to go anywhere in China, as now, for instance, possibly to Kiukiang. He said, 'We,' not 'I,' like Lilian; but he did it by way of self-assertion, all the time filled in his heart with a horrible dread lest he should have

to go on, and tell her about his salary, his income, all the rest that Dr. Donaldson said he ought to tell her in order to place her in a position to know what she was doing. He had said it was unnecessary to tell her anything of all this ; and now here he was beginning already !

‘But if not here, you will at least live among the people who make up the society of this place. And I think it is always of *such* importance to make a favourable first impression upon the society you have to live amongst. It is not as if you were known,’ continued Mrs. FitzHugh to Lilian. ‘If you had lived here you would, of course, be the *darling* of the place, to whom everything would be pardoned.’ This with a side glance at Mr. Fortescue. ‘But now you have to make your way. No one here knows anything about you.’

Then, like Mrs. FitzHugh before him, Mr. Fortescue pleaded that, as he could but be married once, he should like to have his wedding to his own taste. ‘By the way, Mortimer is here, Lilian,’ he said. ‘I should like Mortimer to be my best man, and further than that I do not want anyone.’

‘We have not settled yet when—when—it is to be, or where, or anything,’ said Lilian, half indignantly, to Mrs. FitzHugh.

Then Mrs. FitzHugh rose to take her leave, with a sort of maternal smile, as if ‘There, settle it between you, my children !’ ‘You may count upon me,’ was what she said, however ; and the tone in which she said it made them both feel obliged to thank her, though they did not know for what. However they really were very much obliged to her for going away. That made their thanks more profuse.

She met the Consul-General as she went down the street, and she at once stopped her carriage, and asked if he had yet made the acquaintance of the *charming* girl Mr. Fortescue was going to marry.

‘No—no, I have not.’

‘Such a sweet girl—dear Lilian ! We all came out from England together. Her guardian, Mr. Fortescue’s aunt, such a dear old lady, lived in the most delightful old house at Northampton. I have just been to help about the arrangements for the wedding. They want it *quite* private. I believe there will be no one at it but myself. Old friends, you know !’

'Yes—yes, of course. Well, I suppose I shall have to officiate,' said the Consul good-humouredly.

'Such a lovely girl—a great heiress, too—the father a most distinguished man in the Diplomatic Service!' It was a wonder her lips did not get stiff with uttering the same words. She went round all Shanghai repeating them. Somehow they gave the impression that Mrs. FitzHugh herself had mixed in very good society whilst she had been in England. She often said that she had married Captain FitzHugh in spite of his position because of his sterling merits. They had long believed in his sterling merits; they were beginning now to believe that perhaps she had had something to overlook in the matter of his position.

When she left the room Lilian looked at Claude Fortescue; and he threw himself into an armchair, and leaning back in it, covered his face with his hands.

Lilian laughed. He would have remained with his face covered for ever to hear her. It seemed as if she were a child once more.

But as a practical way of recovering him, she said, 'But if you are going to Kiukiang, ought not you to be making a list of stores? Kiukiang is something like Chungking, I suppose, and you must take everything.'

'I don't want any stores,' groaned Claude Fortescue, still pretending to be crushed for the pleasure of being cheered.

'Oh, yes, you do. You must.'

'If I do I can go to Mackenzie's, and say, Send me stores for six months, not any soups, nor sardines, nor herrings, nor preserved meats, but the other things.'

'I don't like tinned soups, or sardines, or herrings,' cried Lilian, delighted at this similarity of taste. 'But it is really lazy to make them make out your list for you. Now let me see—you must want sugar.'

'There's Chinese sugar.'

'It is not sweet. Mrs. Betterton says it is the dearest in the end, it is so full of dirt. I should like to find a religion that would prevent people from putting sand in their sugar,' sighed Lilian. 'But I suppose that is only in an ideal world.'

'Poor child! Is that your ideal—a heaven of real sugar plums? But surely you have heard of the philanthropic grocer, how he got up in the night and threw all his sanded sugar over

into the Avon, that he might be forced to declare before all his apprentices next morning why he had done it, and thenceforth be for ever bound to live up to his standard—sugar that was really sugar !’

‘No, I never heard of him ; but I suppose he died.’

‘He is dead now ; but, as the story goes, he lived long and happily, and left a numerous progeny behind him. Let us hope that they, too, were men without sand, men about whom there is no deception.’

‘Yes, like you !’ cried Lilian, looking up at him with her childlike, trustful eyes, a slight blush upon her cheek at these her first words of praise. ‘Now write,’ and taking hold of his hand, tried to place the pen in it. ‘Oh, I am so sorry ! How could I be so awkward ?’ as the pen fell to the ground.

‘It was not your fault,’ said Claude Fortescue quickly. His pale face troubled her ; he seemed strangely discomposed by such a trifling accident, for there was no ink-stain on the carpet, as she hastened to point out to him. ‘Lilian,’ said he with sudden determination, ‘we have not yet settled when we are to be married, nor where, as you said just now. I cannot rest till you are my wife.’

‘But you may have to go to Kiukiang ?’

‘Yes ; that is a reason for hurrying. We must be married first.’ Then, as he saw her growing pale, ‘Believe me, my darling, there is not the slightest danger. I know what these Chinese riots are, or I should not dream of taking you there.’

‘I was not thinking of any danger,’ said the girl proudly, looking straight in front of her, her hands lightly clasped in her lap.

‘What were you thinking of, then ?’ he asked fondly, caressing her as he spoke.

She hesitated. Then at last she murmured, ‘I was thinking only of you.’

‘Of me !’

‘But, Claude,’ she pleaded, ‘I cannot be married without consulting anyone, can I ?’

‘Why not, dearest ? Whom do you want to consult ? Am I not enough ?’

‘Yes, yes,’ said the girl fondly, yet still evidently pondering over the question. ‘I suppose you are enough. For me certainly you are enough. And Gardie is dead—dear, dear Gardie.’

‘Yes, dear Aunt Claudia ! She would have been so glad,

Lilian. I almost think she knows—all about it,' he was going to add. Then the 'all' stuck in his throat somewhat.

'I think I ought to let Cousin Mary know first,' said the girl gravely.

He noticed even then with a thrill that she did not propose consulting her, but still the idea alarmed him. 'Oh, Mrs. Betterton! Why, how can you? She is—two months away,' he said almost bitterly. 'We must be married at once.'

'Must we?' said Lilian, looking frightened but unresisting. 'Then had I better telegraph?'

'That can do no good,' said Mr. Forteseue, almost roughly.

'But do you think it is right?' asked the girl, looking up at him as if rather to read the answer in his face than hear his words.

'What right, my own sweet one?'

'Why, that we should be married in this way so quickly, without any thinking it over beforehand as it were. I had fancied that before a grave step like that people should pause and consider it in all its bearings—how it affects them and everyone else. People do not marry for themselves alone, do they? And it is irrevocable.'

'Yes, thank God—thank God it is a step once taken there is no retracing. That makes marriage like death, so restful,' said he with something of that strange expression in his eyes that had frightened her in the garden by the river. 'But of what else have I thought for years, ever since I knew you, sweetest? I have paused too long already, considered too much.' He was walking about the room now, straightening here a photograph, taking up there a book in a way very characteristic of him.

'It must be as you wish, of course,' said Lilian quickly. 'I know you love me, and I love you. But,' looking up pleadingly once again, 'marriage seems to me for other people, a step taken before the world, and a solemn thing. I feel a little afraid, Claude,' and her voice trembled as she turned away.

'I will take care of you, my dearest one. And if that is not enough, you know you can still count upon Mrs. Fitz-Hugh.'

Then she laughed, as he knew she would. And it was a delight to him to see that her colour was coming back, and how each time she laughed now her laugh had a fresher, merrier sound. He trusted she was a child yet at heart, for it



was a child he had first fallen in love with. He had always supposed that she must one day grow into a woman, but he hoped that had not quite come about yet. During that anguished meeting at Wuhu he had been seized by a horrible dread that his Lilian had been changed by some enchantment into a young lady of fashion. That he had hoped she might always have escaped. It was a development of the genus woman in which he saw no utility and a most doubtful elegance. But that had all passed away. She was his Lilian once more, the Lilian he had always loved, straightforward, trustful, and unsophisticated for all her little high-bred air, as well as her travelling about the world. Only one thing he did not allow for—she had learnt to keep her thoughts to herself. It did not follow she was not thinking because there was no further spoken hesitation.

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## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE RIFT WITHIN THE LUTE

I know not of a keener smart  
 Can come to finer souls than his  
 Who hears men praise him, mind or heart,  
 For something higher than he is.  
 Who fain would say, 'Behold me, friends,  
 That which I am, not what you deem,  
 . . . . .  
 But dares not, lest discovery foul  
 Not his name only——'

LEWIS MORRIS.

THERE had come one little appealing note from Lilian : 'Mrs. FitzHugh says I must have a new dress, and it can't be made in the time. Does it really matter what I am married in ?' And Claude Fortescue had written back : 'It doesn't matter in the least. But if you have some little frock I knew you in at Northampton, wear that on our wedding-day, never mind how old it is. Yours, as I have always been, CLAUDE FORTESCUE. P.S. And if the dear old frocks are all stored up "the other side of the moon," wear what you like best, and rest assured I shall like that best too. After all, we are not marrying Mrs. FitzHugh.'

So Lilian wore the little old green and white cotton dress

we saw her in first, and the big flapping hat which had been proved, as Mrs. Betterton had told her it would be, so useless in China, but which unbelieving Lilian had at the last moment flattened into one of her boxes on first coming out, and now produced in triumph. Mrs. FitzHugh had had the satisfaction of getting it straightened for her, and retrimmed with three white ostrich feathers, which made it appear rather imposing and unlike itself. But Lilian looked such a child in her little pale green and white frock peeping from under her hat with eager childish excitement to see if he recognised it, that Claude Fortescue's conscience smote him, and for the first time he wished he had sent a telegram to the old lawyer, her guardian, at Northampton, at least if to no one else. She certainly did look too much of a child to take such a grave step unadvised. But it was the last she would have to take, he hoped ; henceforth he would be always by her side. No one had made any difficulties, neither the clergyman nor the Consul. The girl was under age, of course, but they all understood that she was Mrs. FitzHugh's *protégée*, Mrs. Betterton's niece sent down by her from Chungking for the express purpose of marrying Mr. Fortescue, the late Chungking Consul, a man known at least by repute to everyone in China, and of course an excellent marriage for the girl, who to them all was merely a missionary's niece.

'You're dispensing with settlements,' the Consul-General had said casually. 'Insured your life?'

'I am going to do so,' said Claude Fortescue, 'and to make a will.'

'Ah, well, you know all that is necessary. And I don't suppose settlements are of much consequence, are they ?' said the Consul-General, who had had some experience of penniless girls coming out to China whose passages had to be paid for them, but none of heiresses.

'Not since the last Act, I suppose ? A woman's property remains her own after marriage as before, as I understand,' said Claude Fortescue. Still he felt a little like a thief, thinking of Lilian's money, all the details about the investment of which he had heard so often from Miss Gardiner and the old gentleman at Northampton. He almost wished that she had had none.

As to the aged missionary on whose arm Lilian came up the aisle, he considered himself simply as an ornamental adjunct, and his presence purely perfunctory and to oblige

Mrs. Betterton. He certainly had understood from the latter that the young lady was going to study medicine in Shanghai, and then she herself had said she was leaving for England at once, and now it seemed that she was marrying Consul Fortescue. He did not rightly understand about it all, but even had he opposed the marriage his opinion would have carried but little weight with Lilian. On the first evening of her stay in his house he had observed her looking at the three pictures of different ladies that adorned one wall of his drawing-room. 'That,' the reverend gentleman had said, with the elaborate courtesy peculiar to him, 'that is the portrait of my first wife. That is the portrait of my second wife. And this, as you see, is the portrait of my present living consort.' The girl had shuddered, and sought comfort in the company of Dr. Donaldson, who still mourned his first and only wife after forty years of separation. As it was, however, Mrs. FitzHugh was evidently an intimate friend of both parties, as also of Mrs. Betterton, the young lady's aunt. Not a doubt but that the marriage had already received Mrs. Betterton's approval ever crossed the minds of the worthy couple.

It was over—both ceremonies! No 'just cause,' no impediment could now be brought forward to separate them. Claude and Lilian were Mr. and Mrs. Fortescue now, man and wife, whom 'it should never be lawful to put asunder.' Claude Fortescue's feverish agitation had died away into an almost overstrained solicitude for the girl who had trusted all to him; and the little party, who had been together to the church, were sitting at luncheon in the comfortable missionary household, with its little decorations in the form of Christmas cards framed and silken wall-pockets that never pocketed anything, having to the last resisted all Mrs. FitzHugh's friendly pressure to have a wedding breakfast in her house, when a telegram was brought in.

'Ah, well, I suppose we must start for Kiukiang,' said Mr. Fortescue, and, looking tenderly at his young bride, put it into her hands, that she might read their fate for herself.

'No! no! it is for me,' cried Lilian triumphantly. 'It must be from Mrs. Betterton. I telegraphed to her.'

'You did!' cried her husband. He had made sure that she would not know how to set about sending a telegram to Chungking, since he had, as it must seem to her, forgotten to undertake it for her. Now, as in her wedding excitement

her hand a little trembled in undoing the envelope, he almost snatched it from her, and read it himself before giving it back to her. 'You have my prayers,' he said then, almost mechanically.

'Not good wishes, not congratulations, only prayers,' said Mrs. FitzHugh. 'It sounds a little cold, but our dear Mrs. Betterton always was a trifle peculiar.'

'It is what I asked for. I telegraphed "Pray for me——"' Lilian began explaining, then broke off with a tone of agony. 'Dearest, what is it?'

Mr. Fortescue was leaning back in his chair, his hand pressed to his heart, his face deathly white.

'Some wine perhaps? Brandy!' suggested Mrs. FitzHugh; and Mr. Fortescue had to drink the brandy and water she prepared for him before he at all recovered colour, or seemed himself again.

Their missionary hosts, who were as ardent teetotallers as any Mussulman, had been full of innocent delight in preparing a wedding breakfast about which there was to be nothing alcoholic, and Claude and Lilian had given a ready acquiescence in anticipation. It was a disappointment now that after all the breakfast was not teetotal, but in life so few things turn out quite as they are intended. Only it did seem strangely fortunate that Mrs. FitzHugh should have a flask of brandy in her carriage at the door, and not an arrangement that, but for this sudden call for it, her hosts could at all approve. But as it turned out that they had not a drop of wine or brandy in the house, and as in a case of sudden illness they conceded it *might* be the best remedy, they had not a word to say. Only for years afterwards the old missionary's present living consort kept an eye upon Mrs. FitzHugh as a woman who might any day develop a turn for secret drinking. But Mrs. FitzHugh was rather a lady with an eye beforehand for any practical difficulties that might arise. She emphatically had not *l'esprit de l'escalier*. Such persons are often more valuable in their generation than great geniuses. She never could have made a good missionary, any more than if she had been a soldier she would ever have volunteered to go upon a forlorn hope. Hers was emphatically the temperament to think that

He who fights and runs away  
May live to fight another day—

neither a hero's nor a martyr's temperament, but a very useful

character in every-day life, when mixed with a great dose of kindness and an unfailing fund of good-humour.

Lilian asked no further question, and only a very close observer could have detected that her eyes followed her husband's every movement, for she seemed to show less anxiety about him than anyone. How much he must have suffered some time or other, she was thinking, that even Mrs. Betterton's very name cost him such agony! But she had observed that being questioned brought back that expression she had seen once in the gorges, and wished never to see again. She meant to share his griefs, but she was already resolved never to add to his sufferings by asking him about them. She made up her mind now that she must wait her opportunity, and learn from some doctor what his former illness had been, and whether it had any connection with this last attack of pain. But there and then at their wedding breakfast she resolved she must never say anything about it to him. It was a sad resolve for so young a wife to make. It was she now who made light of her husband's indisposition, and passed it off, for she felt at once he did not want it commented upon. Then, as it seemed they were not to be summoned to Kiukiang, at least for that day, they adjourned to Mrs. FitzHugh's villa. And that good lady's heart was at last made happy, for she could say for ever after, 'Mr. and Mrs. Fortescue spent their honeymoon in my house,' or 'When the Fortescues were honeymooning in my little cottage.'

Indeed, of the wedding party Mrs. FitzHugh was the only one who looked the least like it, dressed all in heliotrope with fresh white tulle bonnet-strings tied somewhat loosely under her chin in a bow of those magnificent proportions that all Mrs. FitzHugh's adjuncts always tended to assume. Lilian's feathers were, however, a great consolation to her, for she herself had bought those feathers, and superintended the curling of them. And now she had a delightful further responsibility weighing upon her, for had she not undertaken to see that her own tailor progressed with and did his duty by those various new garments that Lilian had at last consented to order of him under Mrs. FitzHugh's very severe compulsion? After this, any persons who doubted that she and Lilian Grey had been bosom friends in England, had better keep those doubts to themselves. Mrs. FitzHugh could give proofs to the contrary.

'Sit here, dearest, by the open window,' said Lilian softly.

'I am not ill, my darling. I am perfectly well.'

'Yes, I know. I know. But then I can sit at your feet, and feel the cool air on the back of my neck, as I love to do, and—look up at you.' Only she did not.

'Oh, if you like such a lowly position——'

'I want to go through all life at your feet—to learn of you.' Something, she knew not what, had occurred to unhinge him, to make it necessary for her to come forward more than she would otherwise have done, to protect him. So she abased herself now, that she might raise him again in his own eyes.

There was a book of Dr. Donaldson's on the table, and after they had sat together for awhile hand clasped in hand in too close union for any words, Lilian took up this book and asked him about it. He had not read it, but he spoke somewhat warmly, admiringly of the writer.

'He is a friend of yours!' cried Lilian joyously. 'So many people speak as if they could not be friends with missionaries. That is so beautiful, that in that as in everything else you have so much higher thoughts than other people.'

If there is one thing more painful than another to a high-minded man, it is to have merit attributed to him when he knows he deserves no praise. But Claude Fortescue accepted her tribute without a word of deprecation. Only there was something of the old look of suffering on his face as he said, 'Whatever we may any of us say of missionaries and mission work as it is carried on, there is no doubt there are some among them who are the noblest of men.'

Lilian clasped her hands in delight.

'Do you think so highly of missionaries, though, my child? After all, you have had more opportunity than most of us of seeing their inner life. Do you think they really do good?'

'You too, Claude? Do you ask me that?' exclaimed Lilian, laughing. 'What do you yourself think of clergymen in England? Do you think they really do good?'

'I—I suppose so. I really have no means of judging.'

'And what have I?' cried Lilian, clapping her hands. 'You have certainly lived longer in England than I have in China. And it must be a good deal easier for you to judge about English people than for me to judge about Chinese.' Then more gently, and twining her arm in his, but carefully abstaining from looking at him, 'Dearest, I want you to

think more kindly of Cousin Mary. It was *very* good of her to send me that telegram. You know she grudges every penny she spends away from mission work. And she need not have telegraphed. And I feel so sure, too, it is true that she has been really praying for us to-day. Cousin Mary is not like some people, who say that sort of thing and do not mean it.'

'No, dear, I know she is not.' He spoke as gently as she had done. 'And for all her love for you I know I ought to be grateful to her. Only that seems so natural. How could she help it? And she has been able to help loving me, which indeed is more difficult!'

'But, Claude, she does not speak unkindly of you. I want to tell you something. After I met you that day—that day when you got the boat for me——' He stooped down and kissed her again and again then—hot, burning kisses. And Lilian continued with glowing agitation, 'After that day—I was very unhappy, and one day at last I told Cousin Mary I had met you, and I asked her—I was very unhappy all the time, but I don't know how such a strange idea came into my head—I asked her whether you had ever committed any great sin, killed anyone, or stolen anyone's money—by mistake of course. But such things do happen, at least in books, sometimes.'

It was dark now, but she could feel that he had withdrawn from her, and that whilst she was not looking at him, he was looking steadily at her, waiting, expectant, but no longer caressing.

'And she said—she did not speak hastily—but in that firm way she has sometimes, that makes one sure every word she says is true—quite, quite true, "No, not in his own eyes. In mine, yes; for he has lived a life without God in the world."'

'Was that all she said?' His voice sounded hard and metallic through the fast darkening twilight.

'Yes, except that she said she had heard you had been very ill, but not mad, she said, not mad. So I knew you could not have been, or else Cousin Mary would have been sure to have told me so, for she did not want me to see you again. I know she did not.'

In anyone else's case it would have seemed pitiful to him how Lilian collected every little shred of evidence to prove to him that he had never been really out of his mind, and how

logical she was about it, but as it was his own case he could not help finding it somewhat comical. 'I am glad you are satisfied as to my sanity, for I should have great difficulty in proving it to myself,' he said, and laughed. Then in a graver tone, 'But you are quite right. Mrs. Betterton is one of the truly good people. I will always think of her as such henceforward, and try to love her for your sake.'

Then he drew his wife to him, and pressed a long, lingering, almost reverential kiss upon her lips. For a moment he had fancied Mrs. Betterton had told her the truth about him, and that Lilian had married him knowing what obstacles there lay between them. She would not have been his Lilian if she had, and for one anguished moment he had realised that if his faith in her stainless purity had gone, his faith in all things would have left him, and even his love for her could not have remained behind. All this he sought to atone for by his added reverence now. But he could not tell his young wife how for him she represented not only faith in herself, but faith in God and heaven. Even now that Lilian was his wife so many things seemed still coming between them, and 'putting them asunder.' He wondered must it always go on so? And even as he was wondering came a telegram and a parcel. The telegram was to say the Consul at Kiukiang was better, so that Mr. Fortescue need not apprehend being suddenly called away to replace him. The parcel contained a bit of Chinese embroidery. What they neither of them saw exactly, for just as Lilian was taking it out of its wrappings, exclaiming, 'How exquisite!' her husband hastily took it from her, and thrust it into its paper coverings again. He said something to the servant who had brought in the parcel, and the man took it away.

'Some one must have worked it,' said Lilian bewildered.

'Some one works all the embroideries that you buy. Some Chinese!' said Claude Fortescue with a strange tone of scorn vibrating in his voice. 'I do not want to buy embroideries.'

But Lilian knew perfectly that fairy-like little bit of embroidery in its delicate wrappings had not been sent for sale, and for the first time her confidence in her husband's truthfulness was shaken. 'A life without God!' Mrs. Betterton's words came back to her. They had seemed to clear Claude Fortescue of any deadly sin at the time. But was not such a life in itself a deadly sin? Yet whenever she had spoken with him about religion he had always, she thought,



spoken so reverently and earnestly. And she remembered how Miss Gardiner had said of him, 'A man naturally of such a religious turn of mind!' And she was nineteen, and it was her wedding-day, and the boy had brought the lights, and they were to sit down to dinner alone together for the first time in their lives. He was looking at her with a yearning, questioning expression that brought out all the likeness in him to the pictures of the 'Man of Sorrows, acquainted with grief.' No! certainly he did not look like a man who lived a life without God! And she trusted him utterly once more.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE RIFT WIDENING

The wail of a woman's voice,  
 And the cry of a new-born child!—  
 The snowy drifts were eddying far,  
 The night was bitter and wild;  
 And ever above the wind there came  
 And over the snowdrifts piled,  
 The wail of a weary woman's voice,  
 The cry of a little child.

. . . . .  
 None other saw what the Master saw,  
 None other heard what He heard;

. . . . .  
 Alone with the ghost of a bygone deed,  
 Alone with the risen dead.

ARTHUR SALMON.

'If Shakespeare had lived in China would he have resembled Rabelais?' asked Claude Fortescue with that subtle smile of his, noting some fresh peculiarity of Chinese life in the road below, as seen from the window of Mrs. FitzHugh's villa.

'I should think that might be discussed at almost as great length as the real meaning of the word *Tao*,' said Lilian laughing. 'Why is not everyone as satisfied as I am that it answers to the "Word" of the Gospel of St. John?' They had been married some days now, and naturally she had not been Claude Fortescue's wife so long without hearing something about Taoism. He had even shown her his great manuscript, but there had been no attempt to read that yet.

Her hands were busy with the breakfast cups, and his buried in his trousers pockets. They made a sufficiently striking contrast had there been anyone there to see them both together. Her pose, the movements of her slightly tapering fingers, the very set of her head, all betokened so much energy, such complete inward conviction that life was a task to be carried out faithfully to the end. Whilst his bent figure, his pocketed hands, even his smile, all revealed the man born to look on at life rather than to live.

'Are you so satisfied?' he asked now, smiling again at her tone. 'And what does the Word of the Gospel of St. John answer to? Anyway, when I have written my *magnum opus* upon it—in three octavo volumes—I will dedicate it to you as the one person who has arrived at a conviction regarding *Tao*. It shall be my wedding present.'

Lilian glanced down at a ring upon her finger.

'Oh! that is nothing. Bought out of a shop. I never consider that a present. My gift shall be of the fruit of my brains, worked out of my own moral consciousness, the only way now possible. For although one of the three religions of China—indeed the only genuine Chinese religion, for Confucianism is merely a school of morals, and Buddhism came from India, yet—Taoism of to-day is no help to understanding what it was. To know that, one must dream oneself into Lao-tsze's soul, and so evolve it as he evolved it.'

'I like what he says about water,' said Lilian, looking up brightly. 'The highest goodness is like water, which benefits all things, and without striving for a higher place occupies that which all men dislike.'

'Yes, and again: "There is nothing in the world more supple and soft than water, and yet for dealing with things that are hard and strong nothing can surpass it. Everyone knows that the soft overcomes the hard, and the supple the strong, but no one carries it out in practice." When I thought of that I always used to think of you, the only human being who ever seemed to me fully to exemplify the influence of water.' He was standing over her, looking down at her now. And it was perhaps under his looks, as much as under his words, Lilian blushed such a vivid blush.

'And so all you thought, when you thought yourself back into Lao-tsze's soul, is to be given to me as my wedding present,' said she, putting her hand into his. 'Thank you, Claude. I am sure it will be the costliest present ever wife

received. But you must not hasten to give it to me. I want it to be the work of years yet,' and she looked up at him timidly.

'Years in which we are to be always together, and always happy as we are now,' he interrupted.

'Yes, if I can fancy myself Lao-tsze with you sitting by my side.'

Then the conversation diverged a little, as such conversations are apt to diverge between a bride and bridegroom.

They had had very few wedding presents. One, that fairy-like piece of embroidery, had never been seen again. And another also had seemed somewhat to trouble Claude Fortescue. It was a not very handsome blotting-book, with a red cover on which was embroidered in letters of gold: 'Look not mournfully back into the past.'

'Why not? Why should a blotting-book say that?' wondered Lilian. 'Oh! I see. "Blot it out." Who has sent you that, Claude?'

'Mrs. Robinson, I suppose. It is her writing. But it may be Nelly. The letters are very badly worked, are they not?'

'I think they are,' said Lilian. 'That is the lady you were staying with at Wuhu?' Then after a pause, during which she waited for him to say something, 'Do you think her a very nice woman, Claude?'

'No—no! Not a woman I should like you to be friends with.'

'I could never be friends with her,' said Lilian quickly, but with a little sort of shudder.

'Why not? What do you know of her?'

Lilian, however, said she had only seen her once or twice, and would not explain further.

People had respected their seclusion until they appeared at church on Sunday. Lilian had been a little anxious about that going to church, recalling always Mrs. Betterton's words. But although Mr. Fortescue made a little groan about how he supposed he must put on a Sunday coat, no idea of their not going to church together seemed ever to have suggested itself to him. And after that his friends began to call. Among the first were Mr. and Mrs. Stuckey, who were lingering making a few final purchases before proceeding to their outport. They indeed had been present at the wedding, sitting in a back corner of the church, holding one another's hands,

for Mrs. Stuckey was emotional, and her emotions were apt to be too much for her. She had then and there conceived a tremendous devotion to Lilian, which somewhat troubled Mr. Stuckey. Mr. Stuckey was indeed altogether puzzled by his wife.

‘Stuckey badly wanted a wife,’ said Mr. Cunningham of him. ‘But he has got what he didn’t bargain for—a woman! and he can’t make it out.’

‘Any man would be surprised,’ said the broker, with his hat tipped more on one side than usual, for Sheridans were going up just then, though business otherwise was not brisk. ‘Any man would be surprised to find a woman in such very small compass. She stands no higher than a large Canton vase. A man might think himself safe to get nothing more than a wife in that size.’

Mr. Cunningham looked a little surprised, for he had not been addressing his remarks to the genial broker, who was, however, always to the fore. He accepted the interruption, however, only adding to it, ‘And with vitality enough for a woman of the usual size, not to speak of her eyes.’

‘Oh, her eyes won’t save lanterns,’ said the broker. ‘Though I never saw such eyes! I only was saying something about Belmonts, and——’ The conversation drifted into the usual talk about investments; but if Shanghai had been better versed in the language of Mrs. Stuckey’s eyes, or possessed more confidence in them, Belmonts would have gone down then instead of some years later, and there might have been more saved.

Mrs. Stuckey was not an heiress, people in China now said, decidedly not an heiress, but a sculptor or a sculptress. They did not know which to call her, and they told the tale of how she had got the order to execute her colossal statue of Washington. She had wept before the President, they said. Anyhow she had now married Mr. Stuckey, and she was full of ambition for him. But in the first place she was distracted by inward doubts and misgivings as to the position of the Emperor of China.

‘He also has a soul,’ said Mrs. Stuckey. ‘What efforts have been made to reach it?’ And her large dark eyes looked like lamps shining out into the evening as she asked this question.

‘The Jesuits had a cathedral almost in the palace grounds,’ said Claude Fortescue. ‘I have never heard that any of them

had interviewed him. But many things happen in China of which one never hears, I fancy.'

'He is described as sickly, violent-tempered—throwing anything that comes to hand at the head of anyone who vexes him—with a great dislike to study. In fact, just what one would expect of a boy brought up as he has been,' said Mr. Cunningham, who had always been one of Mr. Fortescue's intimates, being, indeed, one of the few members of the mercantile world who interested himself in things Chinese. He had actually at one time read a paper before the Asiatic Society. People had predicted after that that his business must fail. But it had not so far.

'His character we cannot alter,' said Mrs. Stuckey, turning her lustrous eyes full upon him. 'His surroundings! But he is—there, a human soul! And think of carving a *man* out of a Chinese Emperor! Modelling in clay seems like child's play by comparison. What is a statue of Washington more or less in the world?'

'My dear, recollect I am a Chinese official,' said Mr. Stuckey nervously.

'Yes! Moved to Peking! Promoted! Private business to be transacted with the Emperor! Then I would go in your place,' mused Mrs. Stuckey, 'and speak to him soul to soul. He would not know what to make of it at first. But there is something in the voice of the soul that makes it always intelligible——'

'If it speaks in pure Pekingese,' interposed Claude Fortescue.

'I must study the mandarin dialect,' said Mrs. Stuckey, rising, as if she were going to set about it at once.

'That will at least take her some time,' laughed Mr. Stuckey.

'And you, my dear Mrs. Fortescue, do you not feel that you too have a mission?' asked the little American, looking much taller than she really was in her cloud of draperies, but still looking like a fairy imp before Lilian. 'Or is being beautiful enough? Does it satisfy your soul just to give pleasure by your presence, a flesh and blood Psyche—all complete too, back of the head and arms and all?'

So Mrs. Stuckey, too, was struck by the resemblance in his wife to the mutilated Psyche at Naples. 'Do you see the likeness?' Claude Fortescue asked.

'Yes, the likeness! Nothing more. That Psyche is

Greek, and I have always thought soulless. It is Mrs. Fortescue's soul that we admire when we look at her. We seem hardly to see the envelope, which in most people is all of which one is conscious. When she speaks, it is not her words we listen to, although she is the only Englishwoman I have ever met who pronounced her words to the end. But it is her face we read. She might speak Greek, we should all understand her just as well. But if she spoke to the Chinese Emperor, in whatever language it might be, he would not understand, because he has not been refined—attuned—set to that key. Her emotions, everything about her would be too delicate for him. All crowned heads must necessarily have somewhat coarser sensations than other people. Seen the difference between the domestic pig and the wild pig? I have. I have been out pig-sticking. With the domestic animal you must appeal to his senses rather coarsely—rub his head, then magnetise him. You do not believe in animal magnetism? Ah! but try using it! Mrs. Fortescue does not, of course. There is too little of the animal about her. She is like a hothouse flower. But I should like to have the draping of her.'

'I wish you had,' said Claude Fortescue, seeing that she paused at last. He had driven poor Mrs. FitzHugh half distracted by his want of appreciation of her tailor's handiwork. He had lived too long in China not to have an ingrained horror of yards of good stuff slashed to bits and called trimmings. Besides, 'Don't cut cloth without due cause' is one of the commandments of Taoism. And his eye also had been trained to demand somewhat more harmonious combinations of colour than are usual in Europe. Then at once Mrs. Stuckey began to drape and to dilate upon the idea of her draperies as she did so, whilst Mr. Stuckey stood by delighted to have her energies diverted into an innocuous channel.

'However,' as he said, 'fortunately we are not moved to Peking—and promoted—and all! Will a little place like Wuhu reduce her aspirations, or make them rise and swell? If they do she must burst,' he added with mock alarm.

'How do you think you shall like life in Wuhu?' asked Lilian, as together she and her husband saw them off one fine moonlight evening.

'I shall *rest*,' said the little artist, stretching herself. There was so very little of her to stretch. 'I do not know what it is like to rest. I have always lived in New York and

worked or travelled *hard*. But I mean to rest hard now. And then besides—I have my husband's soul to look into.'

Lilian pealed with laughter as she repeated this speech. 'Let me look into your soul, Claude.'

'No! I object,' said Mr. Fortescue; then added plaintively, 'And Stuckey's not the fellow to like it either. Stuckey has always gone in for being something of a mystery. Was not his manner rather strange to you at first? He seemed quite nervous.'

'He asked me to marry him when we met before,' said Lilian, who had no idea of concealing anything from her husband.

'Oh, indeed!' It was a disagreeable idea to Claude Fortescue that any other man should ever have presumed to think of her in this way. She had always been so emphatically his Lilian to him, that he felt as if other men ought to have known it.

But Lilian did not realise this, as she went on to ask, 'And, Claude, how was it Mr. Mortimer was not best man after all? Mr. Stuckey was asking me about him, and I did not know.'

There was a slight pause before Mr. Fortescue replied. 'He said he had to go north at once to take up his new consulate.'

'But Mr. Stuckey said he was here on our wedding-day. He saw him off himself that evening.'

'Mortimer *said* he had to leave beforehand,' said Mr. Fortescue with again a little stress upon the *said*.

'I liked him so much,' said Lilian a little sadly, almost more because of her husband's tone.

'So *do* I,' said Mr. Fortescue; then looking up quickly, 'He did not offer to you too, did he? I never thought of that.'

'Oh, no, he never offered to me,' said Lilian, and saw the momentary gleam that had lighted up her husband's face give way once more to an expression of settled sadness. It was her right now to try to charm that away, and she set to work at once; but the remembrance of that sadness did not pass away so quickly from her heart as the furrow from her husband's brow.

Soon they had to go to their first party, a dinner at the Consulate, and Lilian—all in white, as draped by Mrs. Stuckey, and approved by Claude Fortescue, with her mother's string

of pearls as her only ornament—was at once pronounced the beauty of the season. After that everyone spoke of her as ‘the beautiful Mrs. Fortescue.’ And Shanghai opened its arms to the newly married couple as it only does in very special cases now, for it has long ago become cosmopolitan, and ceased to be a happy family, though still persisting in keeping up some of the old usages. It even forgave them for having had a quiet wedding; and all the gaieties that were arranged now were somehow arranged with an eye to the Fortescues. The Asiatic Society became fashionable at once, since if Mr. Fortescue did not himself read a paper, he might at least be relied on to comment upon other people’s; whilst the Debating Society had even to turn away people from the doors the night Mr. Fortescue opened the discussion as to whether the recent influx of missionaries was undermining the religious feeling of the Chinese.

‘After all he seems to be a Christian,’ was the discontented comment of more than one missionary as he walked away. ‘I went to oppose him altogether, but there was nothing to oppose. His speech was simply deeply suggestive.’

‘Yes, deeply suggestive! And how poetic! But I never knew all that about the Chinese. Have I been dreaming all the years I have lived in China, and has Mr. Fortescue?’ asked Dr. Donaldson.

‘Szechuan is, I have heard, the most religious province in China,’ said another great Sinologue. ‘Buddhism seems to have come more directly from India to it. And Lao-tsze, I believe, lies buried there, having died on his way to India.’

‘I don’t believe a word of it!’ cried Dr. Donaldson, prepared to jump down the other’s throat. These two always contradicted each other on every subject that ever came up at the Asiatic.

But the other went on quickly now, determined to have his say out, ‘And the Yangtsze Gorges, which cut off Szechuan from the rest of China, are the cradle of all old Chinese poetry—something like the Rhine to the Germans, the land of legend and song. Mr. Fortescue has felt inspired by the beautiful scenes he has been living amongst.’

His opening speech was reported at length in the Shanghai morning and evening papers, and stirred up quite a wave of emotion in missionary circles. The missionaries all wanted to curse it altogether, yet found nothing to curse. As to the Shanghai Club, it pronounced it the finest speech that had



ever been delivered in China, and conversation at the Club bar was perceptibly raised for some days afterwards.

'You see, it is what none of us know anything about,' said the broker. 'We know nothing of the religious feeling of the Chinese—didn't know they had any, indeed—and it is over our heads a good deal too, perhaps; but there's something in it I feel as if I'd been wanting to say ever since I was in China. And that fellow has gone and stood up for the Chinese religion, and made better Christians of us into the bargain. No, thank you! I don't liquor up to-day. I've had enough, I think.'

This was a phenomenal speech from the broker, who always seemed to be the representative Shanghai man, and sufficiently betokened the feeling of the others. But the broker looked weary.

'Oh, he is breaking up. That's the fact. A man does not do after fifty in China, and he has aged fast,' was the comment. Men stood and looked at him. 'Oh, he's breaking up,' they said.

Meanwhile Lilian was asked to read no papers, take part in no discussions, and though she had been allowed to be present at her husband's, and been rapt in interest, her life seemed chiefly composed of trying on new clothes, paying and receiving calls, and dining out.

'Claude, do you not think I ought to do something, as Mrs. Stuckey said?'

'I don't remember her saying it exactly. But you haven't got a mission to the Emperor of China, have you? That would be poaching on Mrs. Stuckey's preserves, would it not?'

'I don't want to poach,' said Lilian equally gaily. He was still sitting at the breakfast-table, glancing over the morning paper, but he laid one hand on her shoulder now, that he might the better look at her, smiling into her face as he did so. 'But I used to teach regularly in the parish school at Northampton, and Cousin Mary was quite pleased at the way in which I got Susanna and little Mark on. So I thought perhaps—perhaps I might be of some use at the Eurasian school here.' She spoke very humbly. But before she had finished her sentence she saw the light fade out of her husband's face, and she felt the hand upon her shoulder tremble. 'Oh, Claude, I am so sorry I spoke of it,' she exclaimed quickly. 'I can do anything else. Of course, I have calls to pay.'

'Yes, you have so many calls to pay; I don't know how

you are to get through them,' said he, but his voice lacked something of its usual music. 'I am sure I could never make so many visits.'

He had tried at first to pay calls with her. But it always turned out that the people had moved from the houses in which Mr. Fortescue had been used to know them, or that he could not find their houses; and when at last they did find the address they were seeking, Mr. Fortescue either got into such an interesting conversation that it was impossible to come away, or if the people were uncongenial groaned so much over such an absolute waste of time and intelligence, and required so much mental reviving afterwards, that Lilian found together they never made more than two or three calls in an afternoon. And fresh people, whose calls must be returned, were coming every day now. So she generally returned her calls now every afternoon, before he left his office, going through them methodically, with a list docketed, and trying to give a regulation ten minutes to each. Calls paid in this way are never interesting, and it was partly because she was so very weary of them she had been thinking of some new occupation for herself. But, anyhow, she could not pay calls in the morning. So when her husband left her to go to his office, she sat and thought by herself, went over the whole little scene again, and knew better than if he had told her that it was at the word 'Eurasian' his hand had trembled.

If husbands realised a little that they cannot put their wives' minds away as they do their hats when they go to their offices, hanging them on an assigned peg till wanted, they would be more in favour than they are of intellectual studies, at least during the first years of married life, when the occupation of—as Mrs. Stuckey expressed it—looking into her husband's soul has not yet lost the attraction of novelty for the wife. Few men's souls will stand the amount of microscopic inspection for which that newly married life offers scope in the East, where people are cut off from all early associations and old friends, without any of those little daily duties life at home almost always affords.

As Lilian sat and thought, so many things unnoticed at the time seemed coming back to her; even Claude's soft 'I object' when she had asked to look into his soul. Like many another naturally intellectual girl, she was altogether ignorant of much in life, only dimly beginning to be aware of her own

ignorance. But the other day she had read 'The Merry Wives of Windsor' with much delight. She would not have delighted in reading it now. But she was very ignorant still, and only beginning to be aware of her own ignorance, and a little frightened. If her faith in her husband left her, she felt as if everything would be gone, there would be nothing then in life worth living for. Perhaps she had been tired out with all the long hot summer and her subsequent gaities. Was that the reason the tears began to run down her cheeks? It had certainly been a great trial of strength. But was that the reason why she laid her head on the table and wept bitterly?

They had not been a month married yet.

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## CHAPTER XXIX

### A MISSIONARY'S TROUBLES

Mothers are the creed of their children.—MARY WILLARD.

It is odd that a man who knows so little about this world can tell us so much about the next.—JOHN BRIGHT.

BUT it is high time to return to Mrs. Betterton, whom we seem to have left upon her knees all this time, as we left her once before, even the shadow of the trackers' coffins taken away from her. Had it been earlier in the day when she got Lilian's telegram, she might perhaps have sent a different answer. But she only received it, as Lilian had thought she would, after a long, weary morning's work, when owing to the noise—they were still trying to teach Chinese children to sing, and the result at first was certainly calculated to break the drums of any but Chinese ears—she had returned home feeling perfectly exhausted, to find that Susanna, having first carefully divested her little brother of every article of clothing, had been insisting on his spending his morning in a bath, by way of keeping him cool, as she said, and was now, and apparently had been for some time past, forcibly holding him down in it. Little Mark after two hours of a cold bath was nearly blue as to his lips, and in convulsions of crying. The Chinese nurse was not to be found at first, and when at last discovered and cross-questioned, would only say she had never

in all her life seen so naughty a child as Miss Susanna, and had gone away to avoid any longer being the unhappy spectator of so much wickedness. In the intervals of kissing little Mark, and otherwise seeking to restore the poor child's vitality, as also soothe his wounded feelings, for it was evident there was some deep dark tragedy underlying this treatment of the bath, Mrs. Betterton appealed to Susanna, but found her stolid and shameless. 'Everyone has been hot all the summer,' was all she said, and she had been determined once for all to make her little brother quite cool. As for that woman—meaning the nurse—'she tells lies, and she has no sense.'

Mrs. Betterton knew both these last accusations were true, and felt hopeless. If only Lilian were still there! She was the only person who had ever been able to soften Susanna's stubborn spirit. If only the other ladies of the mission would help a little! But of course they would say they had not come out to China to see after the education of Mrs. Betterton's children. Must she give up her work to see more to them, then? For it was evident Susanna might any day kill little Mark out of an unflinching desire to do him good. 'I must just shut them up in separate rooms, that's what I must do,' said the ardent missionary, with a pang at her mother's heart the while. Then she opened Lilian's telegram, and instinctively looked at the clock as she read it. She had had nothing to do with weddings in China, and she supposed the old twelve-o'clock law—which is so deeply impressed upon the hearts of the passing-away generation that few but those who have had practical experience realise that it has been replaced—might hold good in Shanghai. 'If she is married already, it would be of no use to say anything against it. It is too late, anyhow, now. She says the day after to-morrow. That means to-day,' said Mrs. Betterton. 'I must make haste and send my answer.' Then with both arms round the much injured Mark, she knelt down and prayed, and only when she rose up from her knees did the telegram she sent occur to her as the most natural and the most suitable under the circumstances.

So she was marrying him after all. And possibly, if Mrs. Betterton had not brought her out to China, it would never have happened; just as her mother might never have married her father but for her going away and leaving her. 'It is all my doing, I do believe, in the end. Oh, why must I always

be *doing* something? Why couldn't I refuse to bring her out to China with me? I feel inclined to vow I'll never do anything again. And, after all, what good does it do? She has married the man who will spoil all her life for her, just as her mother did before her. It is ingrained in the character, I believe, what people do. But then, if that's the case, what is the use of trying to convert the Chinese?' But this idea was so contrary to the whole missionary bent of her character she refrained from pursuing it. 'It is my character, I suppose, to try to make people better, whether it can be done or not; just as it is in Susanna's to try to make Mark cool—poor child!' He had fallen asleep now, wearied out. 'I wonder what Mr. Fortescue has told her. He can't surely have married her without telling her anything. Oh, I suppose he has made it good to her somehow. Lilian loves him, poor child! Her heart would plead on his side even more convincingly than he could. Well, I suppose they will be very happy for a time. They have very much the same tastes, half philosophical, half poetical, neither of them quite certain of anything in spite of all Lilian's directness. That is more than I could say of her father and mother. He was such a thorough man of the world, she such a mere child—at least when he married her. They'd have liked this marriage, I believe. Yes, that's curious when one comes to think of it. I don't believe he'd have seen anything to object to in it, and she would never have understood. They'd both have liked Mr. Fortescue himself. After all, Lilian has married quite into her own class. I married out of mine. I believe I should have felt it a little if we had lived in England.'

But Mrs. Betterton's was too busy a life for her to sit and wonder long about it all. And, curiously enough, no thought of Lilian's money, and how Mr. Fortescue had managed about that, even occurred to her at the time. The reality of Lilian's money had never been very present to her; she had had nothing to do with looking after it, or the matters of guardianship; and that other reality of Claude Fortescue's children, and their Chinese mother, darkened everything else to her in the consideration of his marriage. Her heart bled for Lilian, and the pain she thought the girl must have suffered, the more so as she contrasted it with her own whole-souled happiness in her marriage. Why should this innocent girl have such a shadowed spring-time? But Mrs. Betterton had troubles enough upon her shoulders. Just as in summer-time

it had been impossible to get a breath of fresh air into their Chinese house, so, now the autumn was advancing, it seemed equally impossible to shut out the draughts. And already it felt so cold. It was of no use to look at the thermometer and see it was nothing like so low as at Shanghai, and to say snow never fell and there were no frosts at Chungking. There was also no sunshine—day after day the same leaden sky, and encircling darkness rather than fog. Everything felt damp ; people went by in the streets coughing and sneezing as in England, and everyone shivered. Then, besides the hardened wickedness of Susanna, which was becoming an annoyance to everyone, it was clear that Dr. Maxwell and Miss Pearce were feeling a very natural attraction to one another, and that the announcement of it to the world could not be very long delayed. That in itself was not a matter to be regretted ; but on the other hand Miss Alger was giving trouble, had been doing so for some time past. She was not well, and it was evident it would be better for her to be moved to some other station, possibly even into some other mission. Dr. Maxwell had not behaved altogether well about it all, Mrs. Betterton thought ; she had been somewhat disappointed in him. Anyhow, the position for some time past had been a strained one, even for the onlookers.

Then Mr. Jenkins was a trial. He had insisted on wearing Chinese dress, and he was only just passing out of the stage of wanting everyone to sympathise with him in the burden of having the front of his head shaved once a week, almost going the length of inviting all the ladies to be present at the ceremony, and describing all the details of his feelings under the operation with the greatest minuteness. His pigtail was never out of his mind for a moment ; he was always catching it, or expecting to catch it, in something ; and his winter clothes, which made him look twice the man he naturally was, were as great a source of exultation to him as a new vestment to a High-Church curate. Now he wanted to start a branch mission on his own account somewhere in the province. He thought he and his wife might rent a house somewhere, and other workers come out from England to join them ; and he talked grandly of itinerating. All the while he made little progress in Chinese, and Mrs. Betterton, whose own knowledge of Szechuanese was remarkable, felt ashamed of him directly he opened his lips, and tried to make him see that the

Chinese only understood him when they knew what he was going to say. But the sight of him showing off his old-gold silk pantaloons and violet satin coat, always taking the latter on and off to exhibit its white sheepskin lining, made her feel so irritable she was almost ready to consent to his going to an outlying station, or anywhere.

Then there was poor Janie Frost, always sickening with fresh attacks of fever, and rising up from her sick-bed, gaunt but resolute, declaring she was at last this time quite well, and must address her mothers' meeting. She would go, too, and speak words of power rather from the manner in which they were said than from the matter of them, making the women feel they had, as they said, a wonderful saintly woman amongst them. But in what the saintliness consisted they did not well know, nor that they were themselves in any way called upon to imitate her. They only saw that she was dying as the winter wore on, and the cough settled upon her lungs, whilst the colour deepened on her high Scotch cheek-bones. Dr. Maxwell himself said now there was no hope, unless she could be sent away to good European food and the comforts of a European house. And all the while poor Janie Frost was studying Chinese with an intensity born of the fever that was devouring her, refusing to allow her books to be moved from her bedside, and apparently never realising that she would have no need for Chinese in the land towards which she was hastening. There was no one to send down river with her, and no European house short of Hankow, over a thousand miles away.

'She ought to go to the hospital in Shanghai,' Dr. Maxwell said. 'Sea air might give her a chance.'

No one dared to tell her it was only a chance, and as the leaden skies hung immovable over the city—never a breath of fresh country air, never a ray of sunshine—the poor thing at last herself became impatient to go away. She wanted to grow quite strong again, she said, that she might do her work for the Lord. Work! always her work! That was poor Janie Frost's one sole idea. No thought of marrying or giving in marriage entered into her head. Her prayers were for the conversion of the Chinese, her one hope to be herself enabled to tell them how God loved them, how Christ died for them. Nothing else; that was all she wanted to say. 'For they are good people—good people,' she would say gravely, 'only without God.'

'I have it,' said Mrs. Betterton at last one day when Dr. Maxwell had come away from the sick-room with an even more discouraging report than usual, and was representing the case as urgent—'She must go or she will die'—'I will send Susanna down with her. All that naughtiness will turn into goodness, I believe, when the child feels she has a responsibility laid upon her.'

Then Mrs. Betterton summoned Susanna, and talked to her, told her how very naughty she was, and the despair of everyone, but that she, her mother, had confidence in her notwithstanding, and was about to show it. Susanna's cheeks glowed, Susanna's eyes brightened. Although without the settled redness that was such a disfigurement to her mother's face, she went about looking so like Mrs. Betterton that they all laughed at the likeness.

Even poor Janie Frost laughed. 'Do you think I'll be able to keep you in order, Susanna?' she asked, too much delighted at the prospect of getting to fresh air and no smells to be critical about her companion.

'It is I who am to take care of you, Miss Frost,' said Susanna with dignity, 'and here is your medicine. I have only been waiting till the clock struck to give it to you.'

And as she had begun, so she went on. She put screens round Miss Frost to shield her from every current of air, or fanned her, and wrung out wet rags to apply to her burning forehead as occasion demanded. She had no energy left for naughtiness now, for it was all put into nursing Janie Frost in exact accordance with the Doctor's instructions. She was even so full of it she hardly seemed to feel the parting from her mother and brother.

'You are an heroic mother, Mrs. Betterton,' said Threshie Reid in his loud, genial tones, having waved his hat to the two young ladies, as he called them, and even started a three times three with no one to second him but the Doctor. He had returned from his exploring expedition, and now turned up to see the start; for events do not happen every day in Chungking. Lilian and her companion had been the last Europeans to go down. And none had come up since the three boats arrived together.

But Mrs. Betterton had broken down completely, and the face of anguish that she now turned upon him was quite too much for Mr. Reid.

'I have only little Mark left,' she said.



'And even he is more than a handful,' said the jovial Consul. 'I say, send him round to me when you go out in the mornings. The Consulate is none so lively but that it might be livelier with a youngster tumbling round. And he can't get into more mischief there than he would at home. He and I are just the size for playfellows, aren't we, Mark?'

The little fellow, who was the image of his father, put his hand into the large hand of the Consul, and said enthusiastically, 'Yes, if you'll be Goliath, and then I—I'll be David; and I'll sling the stone.'

'Yes, and cut my head off,' said the big man good-naturedly.

'No, I'll not—not cut your head off,' said little Mark staunchly.

'But David did. He cut off Goliath's!'

'Did David?' said the little child very gravely, his eyes wide open, and with a far-away expression, such as his father might have worn when suddenly confronted with a too literal application of some Christian mystery. Little Mark expressed no opinion on David's conduct, but softly caressed the big Consul's hand, and from that moment fellowship was sealed between them. It was an immense comfort to Mrs. Betterton, who would have been yet more comforted had she seen the great games that henceforward went on at the Consulate—Threshie Reid on all fours and roaring like a dozen lions, and little Mark always overpowering him in one way or another. But she saw the rosy cheeks and excellent appetite with which the child returned.

Susanna meanwhile was all importance. Miss Frost was astonished by her. The child not only stood like a tyrant over her at the fixed times, insisting upon the regulation draught, but she slipped out of bed in the morning and dressed herself without a sound, that she might not disturb the invalid's morning slumbers. And when poor Janie's cough was very troublesome at night, she would be shocked to find Susanna awake, turning her pillows for her, and bringing her refreshing drinks.

But the great moment for Susanna, the phenomenal moment which she would remember all her life afterwards, was when they arrived at Ichang, and found a steamer actually there, and on the eve of starting; and she, Susanna, went on board it and told the captain that she wanted two berths, one a very

good one for a sick lady; and she hoped the steamer was not a very noisy one, and did not shake much, for the sick lady could not bear to be shaken.

It may be imagined how the up-river captain was delighted with the child; and how many suggestions she made for Miss Frost's comfort before she was quite satisfied. The captain carried them all out. He would have been ready in any case to do what he could for a sick lady, but he would never have thought of half that he did if it had not been for Susanna, who was quite like a grown woman, except that she asked for everything she wanted for Miss Frost, without ever considering whether she might not be asking rather much.

'And now, what do you want for yourself?' asked the captain, when they had settled Miss Frost quite to their own satisfaction, and very much to hers. The steamer seemed so beautifully fresh and so spotlessly clean after all her Chinese surroundings of late, and everything looked so English and nattily arranged, a shelf and a place for everything. 'I could fancy myself away at home,' sighed Miss Frost.

'Oh, I can put up with anything, thank you,' said Susanna. 'I am so very strong. That's what makes me so naughty, they say.'

'Oh, so you are naughty, are you?' asked the captain.

'Yes, very,' said Susanna with decision. 'I am the despair of everyone. Mother told me so herself.'

'Oh, then you won't have any jam tarts for dinner. Of course it is only good little children like jam tarts,' said the captain.

'Please,' said Susanna, 'if you have any real mutton, that would be a great treat. And have you green vegetables here—that are safe, I mean?'

'I don't know what the Consul may have sent off,' said the captain. 'He generally sends me a basket from his garden. And so you don't care about jam tarts?'

'I do like them very much,' said Susanna. 'But, you see, we can get them at Chungking. Now, the mutton we get there is not real mutton. I remember what it used to taste like, I think, and I should like to taste it again. And mother only lets us eat tinned green vegetables there. When I am grown up,' said Susanna, 'I mean never to eat a single tinned thing again—except pears. Pears are all right,' she conceded.

In the course of the voyage the captain got fairly well posted as to all the intricacies of housekeeping and living at

Chungking, and a great deal besides. He even heard the true, deep, dark inwardness of Susanna's putting her little brother into the bath, why she did it, and how she felt it her duty to hold him down in it. But the captain was never quite sure that he rightly understood that business. What he never should forget, he said, however, was the sight of Susanna standing outside Miss Frost's door in the early morning the first day after their coming on board, herself not completely dressed, but only in a petticoat and petticoat body, with bare feet, and her hair yet tumbled from sleep, but with her finger to her lips, gesticulating violently. 'And if you please, little missy insisted that the ship's orders should be given in a whisper,' continued the delighted captain, 'because Miss Frost never got what my young lady called proper sleep till the morning.'

Between them poor Janie Frost could not have been better attended to if she had been the Queen herself. She had everything done for her that could be done. Susanna herself skimmed the last drops of grease off every cup of broth before Miss Frost was even allowed to see it. And the captain himself superintended their trans-shipment at Hankow into one of the large lower-river steamers, that seem comfortable enough when you go up, but like wanton luxury when you come down from the interior. But with all their care and coddling, Miss Frost did not revive. Hankow was too cruelly cold, and it was too late for honest beef and mutton to do her any good. She *had* longed for them. But when they came, she turned from them to the old despised chicken broth, and even that was a trouble to her now.

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## CHAPTER XXX

### MISS FROST AND SUSANNA

That when Thy lips, grown pale for us,  
Have taught we dream in vain  
Of happiness beneath the sun,  
Which darkened with Thy pain,  
They yet may tell us, 'Thou shalt be  
To-day in Paradise with Me.'—E. B. BROWNING.

THE St. Andrew's ball had gone off with the usual *éclat*. Shanghai is full of Scotchmen, and it is the Scotch ball that

opens the winter season. Quite a number of men had appeared in kilts, and Italian and German officers had stood round in crowds, watching the wild vagaries of the Highland fling. For weeks beforehand there had been reel practisings, and whilst a young Scotch lassie, the wife of an engineer, had won universal admiration by her steps, there were people who contended that the beautiful Mrs. Fortescue—after the reel practisings—danced the reel as well as any Scotchwoman of them all. There were not so many Scotch women as men to dance the reel, however, and a Spanish lady and an Austrian, not to speak of two French ladies, had to be admitted into Highland circles for the night. The Shanghai Club had been turned topsy-turvy for the festivity. The St. Andrew's and the Mih Ho Loong balls are the only two occasions on which those sacred precincts are invaded by the ladies. The last is the ball given by the Hook and Ladder Company of the Volunteer Fire Brigade. 'Say the word, and down comes your house,' is their device, and they dance in scarlet shirts, leather girt, black trousers, and leathern helmets, the dress in which they extinguish the so-frequently-occurring fires. Some people say the Mih Ho Loong ball is the best of the season; it is the last, and professes to be the most select. The Scotch ball, on the other hand, piques itself on including all the Scotch, except those men who have not subscribed. And certainly the Scotch dress, when worn by a well-built man dancing a sword dance before an admiring ballroom, could not well be surpassed. Lilian had never seen anything of the kind before, and even Claude Fortescue looked on amused. 'To think of these men, with these dresses and wild whoops, trying to elevate that product of ancient civilisation, the stilly moving, softly silken-clad Chinaman!' said he. 'You were not in it just now, my dearest. Anyone could see you were an Englishwoman. I dare say we danced wild dances of the kind in the time of the Druids, but not since then.'

Little time, however, for him to converse with Lilian, for she was in high request. Scotchmen declared she danced nearly as well as if she were a Scotch girl, and, one and all, they had hopes that she would soon dance what they called the Shanghai waltz. Claude Fortescue laughed as he heard them talk, for he was sure it was no prejudice made him think his wife the best dancer and the most exquisitely graceful woman there. It gave him pleasure to go to a ball just to see her moving about among the crowd, always refined, high-bred,

self-possessed, and so fair to look upon. As for himself, he had never danced, and could not have done so now if he had tried, but he liked to watch the others. Neither was he a Scotchman, so there was no temptation to stay for the second supper, after the ladies have gone, when all the Scotchmen take hands and sing 'Auld Lang Syne,' and the fun waxes fast and furious. And at a fairly early hour they left the rooms which a whole company of blue-jackets, from the English man-of-war in harbour, had been busy decorating all day.

Then came all the Christmas festivities—tableaux at one house, chiefly in honour of Mrs. Fortescue, who was requested to appear in 'Una and the Lion,' also as the Queen of the Fairies. At another house they were asked to an enormous dinner-party, where tables stretched and slanted all about the room, so as to get in all the guests, and where, in the course of dinner, a servant went round distributing wreaths of flowers, after which men and ladies alike sat rose-crowned, like ancient Romans, many of the men improving wonderfully in appearance under this adornment. After that the County Club began its entertainments, and Lilian was asked to take part in a play there. All Shanghai was delighted, and declared such acting had never been seen before.

'But I did not act at all, Claude. I was just myself,' said Lilian, in some trouble, after it was over, and she found herself overwhelmed with compliments.

'You must never complain that rewards and punishments are unjustly awarded,' said he, quoting with great seriousness from a Taoist classic.

'I do not want to complain,' said Lilian. 'But did you think I acted well—I mean that I acted at all?'

He meditated for a moment or two. 'I had great delight in watching you,' he said. 'I would not have had a gesture or an intonation different. It was, I think, a completely perfect impersonation. But if you ask me if you acted—No! I believe you are right. There was no acting at all in it; there is no acting at all in you. You could not play a part to save your life, I believe.'

Then the colour mounted into Lilian's cheeks. Did he really think that of her? And was she not playing a part all the while? She thought, for some reason or other—what she could not understand—he wanted her to be satisfied with balls and parties. And she had tried to seem satisfied. Had she really played her part so well in life that he believed her

incapable of acting, and satisfied? There was a fancy-dress ball in prospect. Her next occupation must be to arrange her dress for it, and his. She was glad it was his, too, this time. It was not at all after Lilian's heart, but she was becoming versed in scraps of Taoist lore now, and she murmured to herself, 'One pure act of internal resignation is more worth than a hundred thousand exercises of one's own will.' Then, as he went off to his office, she sat down with a volume of national costumes. Was that like Claude? Was this? Or this? He did not seem particularly suitable for a Spanish matador or a Greek pirate. Lilian felt a little weary, almost as if life would be tolerable were it not for its amusements.

A knock at the door! And a small figure standing in the doorway.

'Please, Mrs. Fortescue, may I come in? Miss Frost is at the hospital. She's dying, and the doctor says you must come at once if you want to see her. So I've kept my ricksha waiting.'

'Susanna! Is that really you, Susanna? Why, how wonderful! Where are Cousin Mary and Mark? But don't say Mrs. Fortescue. Call me Cousin Lilian, as you used to do.'

'I didn't know if I might now that you are a married lady,' said the child, surveying her from head to foot gravely.

'Why! how you are grown, Susanna! And you look so much older, too.'

'I can't say as much for you, Cousin Lilian. Why, I had a frock just like that when I was last in England. Doesn't it make you look just like a little child? I feel the oldest now. But you are not coming at once. And I must go back, whether you come or not.'

Then Lilian hastened to put on her outdoor garments.

'And will you tell her, Cousin Lilian? Or ought I to?'

'Tell her what?' asked Lilian.

'Why, that she is dying. The doctor here says she may die any minute, and she doesn't know it a bit. I thought I was rather young perhaps.'

'Yes, I should have thought the doctor——'

'Why, it is his business to cure her if he can. It is ours to prepare her for the other world.' Susanna spoke so exactly in her mother's tones Lilian was petrified. 'Not but that I think she is prepared. Only she has got one of those dreadful Chinese characters—twenty-three strokes in it—and she can't

feel sure she has got it into her head. I have, I think,' said Susanna. 'It is grass at the top, and there is no cover, but a sentence underneath—yes, and walking, and the radical is that prancing horse they have. I think I could write it. But Miss Frost does not feel sure she could, and she is too weak to sit up and try. It means "to alarm," you see, and she has got it on her nerves. She says if she can't at least learn one Chinese character a day, how is she ever to get on? That shows she doesn't know she is going to die,' said Susanna triumphantly. 'But as to being prepared, I am sure she is that. So it is nothing but telling her. And I thought of doing it. Then I thought it might be better for you. She might have some last things to say she wouldn't say to me. She has something she wants to say to you, I know, because she said so. And that made the doctor tell me I must come for you at once. There was no time to be lost, he said.'

There was none indeed. Lilian was startled by the change. They found the tall, gaunt Scotchwoman with a burning colour, her eyes wild, her hair dashed back from her temples. She looked like one of the ancient prophetesses as she lifted a long bony arm. 'Mrs. Fortescue,' she said, 'I have long wished to see you. For I have a message to give you face to face, and in the presence of God. "Is this a peace that ye have made unto yourselves?" To have married a man who is without Christ in his heart—you that were to be God's missionary when I last saw you, bringing gifts of healing—gifts of healing to the nations——' She was gasping for breath between her sentences, but she held up one bony finger and pointed, holding Lilian spellbound, whilst the colour flamed in her worn cheeks, and her breath came in hot, panting gusts. 'After all that we have heard of him in Chungking, your marriage is a disgrace to the whole missionary body in China. It is a disgrace and—and a scandal to have married a man who—who——'

'Miss Frost, you will do yourself harm if you talk so much,' said the stern voice of Susanna, rearranging the bed-clothes, that Miss Frost in her agitation had displaced.

'Oh, my dear child, it doesn't matter now.'

'But you wouldn't leave her in pain, would you?' said her youthful tyrant. 'Look at her face! And you understand you've got to go, don't you? No more need for Chinese there. Let me put away the books. And do you kiss and make friends.'

'Oh, Susanna, you're too—too—good,' gasped Miss Frost.

Susanna took these words as a parting recognition of her ministrations. But Lilian, even pained and startled as she was, could not but see that Miss Frost, always tormented by a sense of humour, even in her death agony could not refrain from being tickled by the self-conscious sense of importance of the child.

'My husband is not what you think him,' she said now, speaking each word so distinctly it even startled herself. 'Believe me, his wife. But thank you for warning me, dear Janie. When one is too happy, one is apt to forget——' Tears stopped her utterance.

Susanna looked at her curiously. To a child the sight of a grown person crying is always more surprising than pathetic. 'I think we ought to pray for Miss Frost now, Cousin Lilian,' she said. 'Will you say the Lord's Prayer? She likes that. She does not like all our prayers.'

Together Lilian and Susanna knelt down and prayed, Janie Frost's face showing by its workings that she was still following the prayer. There was a radiance over the hard Scotch face. 'Our Father,' she said, and again she murmured, 'Thine is the kingdom,' but that was very low.

'She said once she should like to die to the Old Hundredth,' said Susanna, rising from her knees; and standing bolt upright by the side of Miss Frost's bed, with her hands clasped tight in front of her to help her to remember the tune, Susanna sang in clear childish tones, and without one false note, 'All people that on earth do dwell.' Miss Frost's face lit up once again at the sound of the beloved words, then a shadow seemed to steal over it, only as Susanna's voice rang out clearer and louder, the child actually straining her voice that the words might reach the dying woman's ears, 'Come ye before Him and rejoice,' she was rewarded by seeing the light of joy on the homely Scotch features, that for that moment shone glorious with a glory as beyond death. The thin hands were outstretched, the head just raised from the pillow; then it fell back, and Janie Frost was gone from among them, passed away to the land where there would be indeed no more need for Chinese books.

'And now, what do we do next?' asked Susanna, suddenly looking very blank, and as if she were going to cry, now that she had sung her psalm to the end. Lilian began to find her insistence on always doing something rather appalling. But one of the Sisters of St. Vincent, with the big white bonnet



and grey-blue dress, now came forward from a distant corner, where she had hidden because the sight of her rosary was too great a trial to the anti-papistical Scotchwoman in her feverish condition. And it was she who closed Miss Frost's eyes, and undertook to do all that was now needed.

'And don't you think they might be buried with her?' asked Susanna, with another glance at the Chinese books. They were evidently very much on the child's mind. In reality she longed to possess them, to study Chinese out of them, and always tell the tale how they had killed their first owner. Besides, she had seen Janie Frost using them so often. 'The doctor said they killed her. If she would only have given her mind rest, even on the voyage down here, he says, she might have recovered. But it was of no use my telling her so. If I took the books away, she kept thinking about them, and only worried worse than ever. Look! shall I show you that character that kept her awake last night? I can write it, I think.'

But Lilian could not see it for her tears. Then she looked at her watch, and hurried Susanna away. Claude would be coming home; he would be missing her; she had never been out when he returned before. Only then did Susanna remember she had a long letter for Lilian from her mother. 'And I'm to stay with you, if you'll have me. Or you're to send me to school, just as you think best, just as if I were your own child. And I'm to be very good, and do everything you tell me. And I mean to, Cousin Lilian, though you do look so young and have such a baby freck. For I don't want to have too much to think of when I die, like poor Miss Frost there. Cousin Lilian, do you think I'll have to think then of how I put Mark into the bath and held him down? I could write and tell mother how sorry I am I ever did it. And I really am, because I knew it grieved mother dreadfully. And I know mother would never have sent me away if I hadn't been so naughty. And she must miss me dreadfully, I'm sure, because, you see, at least I made somebody in the house she could talk to. Mark is too little, you see. But I don't want to have to think of it all when I lie dying, because it was very unpleasant. I got wet all over, and Mark bit my hands, though I never told. Do you think I'll have to repent of it all over again when I'm dying?' .

'I don't know,' said Lilian gravely, though in her heart she was echoing Miss Frost's words, 'Susanna, you are too

good.' 'But you certainly ought to write and tell your mother you are very sorry you were so naughty.'

'I am indeed,' said Susanna. 'And Miss Frost said, you see, I'd been good to her, and so I mean to be with you, Cousin Lilian. But you must do just what you like about me.'

Lilian was about to beg her to consider their house her home, and tell her she should love to have her with her, when she remembered her husband might not like it. Somehow, there never was anything she felt quite sure of his liking or not liking beforehand. And with that thought came back to her with a fresh sting the bitter recollection of Miss Frost's words: 'After all that we have heard of him in Chungking, your marriage is a disgrace and a scandal.'

Just as she was thinking of them afresh—they had never been quite out of her mind since she had heard them—Susanna shook her wise little head, and said abruptly, 'And, Cousin Lilian, Miss Frost had a great deal of fever, and did not always know quite what she was saying these last few days. I did not understand what she was saying to you. But I saw it hurt you. And if I were you, I wouldn't think twice about it. I was often hurt by what she said to me, but she didn't mean it, I know.'

'Thank you, Susanna,' said Lilian very quietly.

Then the next moment she was folded in her husband's arms. He would have liked 'to carry her in his hands,' as the Germans say, and to make all life's ways smooth for her. And he had never come home and missed her before. And now to see her come home with such a pale grave face made him additionally solicitous. He had never seen Miss Frost, and though grieving at once with Lilian's grief, he was soon intensely amused by Susanna's quaint, grave ways, as Lilian had expected he would be. And he at once told the child she was to stay with them as long as they could make her happy, for he always knew what Lilian would like.

All luncheon time Susanna ate and talked, and made them laugh 'inwardly, awfully,' as the little boy said he swore—'not aloud, you know, auntie.' But luncheon was hardly over before the child said, 'And now, please, Cousin Lilian, can I have paper and ink to write to mother at once? I want to tell her how sorry I am, and all about it all, before I forget.'

'So now an occupation has come to you in your own house, Lilian,' said her husband, 'which is much better than going out

to it. You can teach Susanna her lessons, if such an advanced young woman can take lessons. Is not that much better than going out to a school, as you proposed ?’

When he referred so lightly to her request to go to the Eurasian school, Lilian almost thought all she had thought, felt, imagined, and wept over had been pure fancy, nothing more. But Janie Frost’s words were still ringing in her ears, and she knew, whatever Susanna might say, Miss Frost had known what she was talking about when she spoke them. ‘She heard my answer,’ Lilian kept repeating to herself. ‘I made her hear that.’ But then the thought came to her, Miss Frost was dead now, and whatever was true she knew it now. And Lilian hung her head, for she knew she did not herself know the truth. And she also realised now, for the first time, that she did not wish to know it now.

‘You look tired out, my dearest, and no wonder. But do, pray, rest now.’

‘Why, Claude, I am always resting. And there is the funeral——’

‘I will inquire about that. You want to go to that? You must not overtax yourself, Lilian,’ and he looked at her so anxiously, so troubled in her trouble, Lilian collected all her strength again to look calm and self-possessed, and speak as usual. ‘I should like to go, and Susanna will certainly wish to. I think we ought both to go. We all came out together, you know. And Miss Frost was always so really good. Ah ! that reminds me. I suppose I ought to write and tell Mrs. FitzHugh. Oh, and, Claude, after all, Dr. Maxwell and Miss Pearce are going to be married. At least, so Cousin Mary says she thinks.’

‘Dr. Maxwell ?’ he said vaguely.

‘Yes, Dr. Maxwell—the doctor they would not allow me to help any more, because they said he was making love to me—or I to him. I really never understood which. That was why I was to come down to Shanghai to study medicine, instead of learning from him any more.’

Then, after all, Mrs. Robinson had had some ground for her accusation ! Claude Fortescue went away looking nearly as serious as Lilian had done. He wondered how many more there might be who had paid their court to her. It was a most disagreeable idea to him. He would have preferred to think that his wife had never even been looked upon by another man before he married her. And it seemed unworthy

of Lilian, all this love-making. She said Mr. Mortimer never had. For his own part, he knew now that he had always felt as if he, too, were in love with her. Could that possibly account for his refusing to be best man? It rankled in Claude Fortescue's breast, and had given him more pain than he had ever allowed to himself. For were they not in the same service, and did he not know that the other's saying he must positively leave by the steamer of the night before was a mere excuse, whether he had or had not done so? But there had been that about Mortimer's manner when he declined the honour, as he had called it, that had made it impossible to press the matter.

Meanwhile Susanna was writing in her childish round hand: 'I like Mr. Fortescue very much. He is a very kind gentleman, and asked me to stay directly he saw me. Cousin Lilian did not. But she did hug me so when I came in. And now, dear mother, I must tell you a very sad thing, and I don't know what you will think about it. But directly Miss Frost saw Cousin Lilian, she began to scold her really awfully, and say dreadful things about Mr. Fortescue, so I thought it was best to stop her, because I have often heard you say "the spoken word no man can take back," and I did not know what more Miss Frost might be going to say. So I just told her straight out she was going to die, and I thought they had better kiss and make friends. I don't know if you will think I did right, but poor Cousin Lilian almost looked as if she would die too. I told her afterwards that I hadn't understood what Miss Frost had said, which wasn't quite true, because I did understand all she said, only she didn't say why she spoke like that, and I can't think. And I told Cousin Lilian afterwards that Miss Frost often did not know what she was saying the last few days, and had hurt me more than once. And that was not quite true, too, because I never felt hurt. But I meant I should have if I had thought she was quite herself. So I hope these are not stories that I shall have to repent when I lie dying. Because I don't want to have things like that to think about then. And I don't want to have to repent about putting Mark in the bath either. So please, mother, will you believe I am very sorry that I did it, and that I was always so naughty at Chungking? I say it quite solemnly now, all the same as if I were dying. And I can't think why it was, unless it was the bad air and never going out. For I don't ever wish to be naughty now. I don't indeed, but just

the other way. I hope you and Mark are quite well. My love to Mark, and to Mr. Threshie Reid, and to everyone.

‘P.S.—Cousin Lilian looks quite different now—not as she used to do when I always had to do my lessons only because she wished it. She has a frock like what grandmama gave me last time we went to England, only hers is green, and mine was blue.

‘P.S. 2.—I am sure Mr. Fortescue is a real Christian. He looks just like one. When I marry, I should like to have a husband just like him. He looks at Cousin Lilian in such a way as if she were too good to last. I mean to be very good. Ever, dear, dear mother, your most loving and repentant daughter, SUSANNA.’

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## CHAPTER XXXI

### SUSANNA IN THE SEAT OF JUDGMENT

Having no duties to perform, I am obliged to put up with pleasures.—MONCKTON MILNES.

IF Claude Fortescue had so far escaped much questioning from his wife, he now met with the severest daily cross-examinations at Susanna’s lips. The child’s curiosity was violently excited about him, and she wanted to know the why and the wherefore of everything. ‘Cousin Claude,’ she said one Sunday, ‘if you think the Taoist religion worth spending so much time upon, I wonder you think it necessary to go to church.’

‘I do not think it necessary, I believe,’ said he, smiling at his tormentor, ‘any more than any other ritual observance. But it may tend to edification—or it may not,’ he added to himself, with an uncomfortable recollection of the trial of that morning’s service.

‘I do not see how it can tend to edification,’ said Susanna, with her most grown-up air, ‘where there is so little earnestness on the part of the congregation. I have always heard that Shanghai is a sink of iniquity. Those were Mr. Jenkins’ very words, and Dr. Maxwell quite agreed with him. And as to the sermons, I should be ashamed to preach such a baby one as we heard this morning.’

'I am surprised at you, Susanna. Have you forgotten the text, "Judge not, that ye be not judged"?''

'Now, about that text,' asked Susanna, looking up eagerly, with her mouth full. 'Are you quite sure it was in the original? And is it properly translated? Because I don't know Greek, you see, nor Hebrew, and people make such mistakes with Chinese, I know. And I don't want to obey a doubtful text, which seems to me a very ridiculous one too.'

'O Susanna!' cried Lilian, greatly shocked.

'Well, Cousin Lilian, does anyone obey it? Aren't people judging all the time? And what was judgment given for if you are not to use it? People only quote that text when they don't like your judgment. Cousin Claude doesn't really like the sermons any better than I do, for he always goes to sleep. I see him. It is only the Roman Catholics who say no one is to use the judgment at all. And that's what we think so wicked in them, wrapping in a napkin the talent God has given them. No, when I grow up I think I shall be a Free-thinker, for that's what all the nicest people are. Mr. Threshie Reid said he was, and you are too, aren't you, Cousin Claude? I like to be free.'

'How would you like to be an Agnostic, and humbly say life is a great mystery and you knew nothing about it?'

'I should not like that at all,' said Susanna. 'And I don't see any mystery in life. You have to eat to live, and to eat wholesome food to keep well—this water has all been boiled, hasn't it, Cousin Lilian? Now, I think death is a mystery, if you like. There was Miss Frost, one minute wanting everything done for her, and the next minute you couldn't do anything for her any more. That made me *think*,' said Susanna. 'But I am quite used to life. Only what mother always said was, the one important thing is whether you are in the right way or not. Do you think you are in the right way, Cousin Claude?'

'What, *Tao*! You are attacking me in my stronghold, Susanna! You must read the *Tao Teh King* and the divine classic of Nan Hua if you want to understand how to follow the straight wide road, from which the many wrong ways of men diverge.'

'Mr. Fortescue always answers like that, so that one knows no more,' said Susanna, folding her hands to say her grace after luncheon. 'But do you think, Cousin Lilian, he really means that one must learn Chinese? I always thought

the Bible was quite enough, and mother always reads it in English, and nobody could be more good than mother.'

'That's right, Susanna. Follow your mother, and you can't go astray.'

'If we could all be like Cousin Mary !' sighed Lilian.

'My dear Mrs. Fortescue'—and there was Mrs. FitzHugh, magnificent in her Sunday best—'excuse my coming in on Sunday and at luncheon time, but will you join in a special minuet for the fancy ball? I came at once to ask you, because, if so, that pretty well settles the question of dress. And, to tell the truth, I've promised to persuade you. She'll look exquisite in powder'—this aside to Mr. Fortescue.

'Run away, Susanna, I can't have your mind contaminated by fancy-dress discussions on Sunday. And I'm sure it's time for your Sunday-school class,' said Claude Fortescue.

Susanna went promptly.

'And will you, my dear Mrs. Fortescue, drive me to the next paper chase? I want so much to go, and alone, you know. And there's that bazaar they are talking of for the tower of the church. I thought it would be so very nice if we could share a stall together. I'd provide all the things, and——'

But there Claude Fortescue interfered. His wife was undertaking too much already, and he could not consent to her joining in a bazaar stall. He was a little surprised by Lilian's grateful look, till Mrs. FitzHugh went away, and she explained that, from her point of view, a bazaar to get up funds for a church desecrated the building it raised funds to build. But Mrs. FitzHugh immediately pursed up her lips, and assumed that mysterious air of complete intelligence thought necessary by some women. 'Then we give up the bazaar stall,' she said. 'Oh, no! I shouldn't think of it by myself—shouldn't think of it. I will help dear Mrs. Forbes and Mrs. Phelps. They are both at their wits' ends.'

But she went to two paper chases with the Fortescues, and it was only after that she allowed herself to be put up for the Country Club, and entered the charmed portals as a member, not only a guest upon sufferance. She was indeed becoming a leading personage in Shanghai now.

And before they all knew where they were, the Shanghai winter, with its brilliant sunshine, and keen fresh air—the winter with its frosts and threatenings of snow that never fell, with its beautiful sunsets and occasional soft spring-like

days, interspersed with bouts of raw, black weather, when the wind blew straight off the icebergs round the North Pole down into everyone's bones and marrow—the winter was over.

Twenty-three steamers had started for Tientsin on one day, communication with the North of China being again reopened by sea, and the peach orchards round Shanghai had all looked for a fortnight as if dressed out by fairies in pink and red skirts. The Mih Ho Loong ball was already a thing of the past, cross-country riding forbidden because of the crops, and the spring races were upon them.

The Shanghai races are not what they used to be when everyone had ponies, and people rode their own, and backed their own or one another's luck. The Leviathan Stables, entering a string of twenty ponies or more, and buying up all the high-priced griffins over everyone else's head, have spoiled the excitement somewhat, though if the end of racing be to improve the breed of horses, it certainly tends each year towards bringing down a larger mob of griffins from the North. Business men are apt now to go up country for the holidays ; every houseboat on the Soochow Creek is usually engaged for the occasion long beforehand, and there are even cheap return trips to Japan, when people get four days' sea-sickness and a day in Nagasaki cheap, if it suits them. But the races are still a great meeting time, against which men, if they can, plan their run up to Shanghai, and in conjunction with which ladies from the outports try to time their visits to the dentist, and inspection of spring or autumn fashions, as the case may be, in the Shanghai shops. The autumn races are the most important from that point of view ; they are also, as a rule, the first cheerful event after the depression that falls on people when in the month of September so many sicken and even die after the heat of the summer is over. But the spring races, on the other hand, are the last grand flourish of merry-making before summer holds China in its grip once more, and the spring dresses are the prettiest. So there is something to be said for both race meetings.

The Shanghai racecourse is as nearly perfect as the Model Settlement boasts are its cricket ground, its paper chases, boat races, drag hunts, and every other accessory of all possible sports. For Shanghai men are nothing if they are not athletic ; they pique themselves upon being picked men as to health and stature, and certainly their rosy cheeks and general boyishness of aspect on into the forties speak well for



the uses of exercise under a sub-tropical climate. It is only when they get into the fifties Nature seems to avenge herself, and they age rapidly. There is, however, one fault in their racecourse, and it is a great one as far as ladies are concerned. With an absolute disregard of that wind-and-water philosophy, or science of aspects, that is often said to be the real religion of the Chinese, the Shanghai men, who have built their theatre with its door to the north-east, so as to welcome every icy blast in winter, and deny access to every reviving breeze in summer, have also turned their grand stand so as to court the north-east breeze. The consequence is, ladies, especially ladies in spring dresses, eagerly quit its comfortable seats to walk up and down and up and down the plots of turf against the railing, and when too tired to walk more, drop in to those large tea-parties in the neighbouring villas that are more and more every year attracting people from the racecourse, to the detriment of the general gaiety of the scene. This year, however, it was understood that only Mrs. FitzHugh's party on the third afternoon was to interfere with the races. People understood it was to be a big affair, but very select, therefore necessary to show yourself to make evident that you too had been invited. Mrs. FitzHugh's windows commanded the racecourse, and Captain FitzHugh had rigged up all manner of marvellous marquees, outside blinds, and hammocks so as to see the races with every luxury and comfort. That, however, was to be on the third day.

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## CHAPTER XXXII

### SHANGHAI RACES

The Dean is dead: (pray what is trumps ?)  
 Then Lord have mercy on his soul !  
 (Ladies, I'll venture for the vole.)  
 Six deans, they say, must bear the pall.  
 (I wish I knew what king to call.)  
 Madam, your husband will attend  
 The funeral of so good a friend.

SWIFT.

THE first race had been run, but there were very few ladies yet on the grass plots, when Mr. and Mrs. Fortescue walked on, Lilian in one of the new costumes just arrived from

England, that are always an event in life in the East. They were at once received, as it were, by Mrs. FitzHugh.

‘My dear Lilian, how lovely ! That bonnet is quite the last thing, I am sure. I have only seen it in “Punch” as yet ; that is always my fashion-book. And now I want you to take a ticket for the raffle that I am getting up for poor Mrs. Frederick. You know her husband has just died at Amoy, and left her absolutely destitute. They call it sunstroke, but it was of course—Oh, she has gone through a great deal. So I am raffling some silk embroidered curtains for her—the most exquisite things ! I don’t know how they came by them. Then there are some ivory-backed brushes—quite fairy-like ! I have not decided yet whether to make two lots of them, or put them with the curtains. But you won’t care, I know, if you’ll take a ticket to oblige me. You see, being in the same service with Captain FitzHugh, I feel called upon to do all I can. And she is a most sweet little woman. Two tickets ! Oh, that’s too kind. I should soon make up my numbers if everyone were so generous. They are five dollars each. Now I must take up my position by the *pari mutuel*. The men who win at least cannot refuse to take a ticket for poor Mrs. Frederick.’

And take up her position she did.

Claude Fortescue was so entertained by watching what he called her *modus operandi*, he could not be got away. ‘But do—do, Claude. At least, don’t stand so near. People will think I am mixed up in it,’ said Lilian in great distress.

‘No, I don’t think they will,’ said he, glancing at her with an amused smile for a moment, then listening again to Mrs. FitzHugh. One or two men had felt annoyed, and gone up to her rather impudently, tendering their money at once without being asked, as if she were a professional beggar. But Mrs. FitzHugh disarmed them.

‘Oh, now, this *is* kind. Without being asked, and before you know whether you have won or not ! Now, this I do call *real* charity. Poor Mrs. Frederick ! I must tell her of it. It will comfort her to hear how she is felt for. I always knew you had a kind heart, Mr. Rhodes, and Mr. Cardy too.’

‘It is quite a lesson in diplomacy,’ said Mr. Fortescue, glancing at his wife to see if she appreciated it. As he did so, he caught sight of a pair of broad shoulders, bushy brown whiskers, and a somewhat florid countenance, shouldering through the crowd of men to get a ticket. ‘Ah, Threshie, is

that you ? Why, I thought you knew my wife !' as he saw the other look round shyly, half bow, then pass on.

Mr. Reid paused, and grew redder than ever.

'How are you, Mr. Reid ? We heard you were expected. And how are they all at Chungking ?' asked Lilian, holding out her hand with great cordiality.

Thus addressed, Mr. Reid shook hands, which he did with much effusion, only remembering all the time, a little shyly, how often he had told Lilian that it was her duty to do all she could to entertain him at Chungking, because his predecessor had gone out of his mind from the dullness there. 'Mad as a hatter,' he remembered saying, and Lilian remembered it too. And there stood Claude Fortescue, dressed, like his wife, in his last new clothes from home, a flower in his button-hole, his hair cut and brushed, his hat dented in in the fashionable way, and altogether looking quite as conventional as anyone.

'We have increased our numbers, and we're an open port now. But I have nothing to do with the place any more, of course. I am on my way to Corea now. But did you hear of Ward taking three months coming up to relieve me ?'

'Three months !'

'Yes ; he got stuck between Hankow and Ichang—couldn't get the boat off. That took three weeks. One month up to Ichang. Then he started in a houseboat—got shipwrecked. Went back to Ichang, and fell sick. Two months. Third month he started in a chair, found the bridges carried away in one place, couldn't get on, harked back. Tried another route, sprained his ankle, got sunstroke, finally took boat at Changchow, and arrived at Chungking at the end of the third month, so cross there was no doing anything with him. A fine pace I came down, though, I can tell you. I came down in the post boat. Determined to do it from the first day I arrived there. Arranged it all beforehand—at least my boy did. Capital fellow, my boy ! But I haven't recovered my breath yet from the pace. How did you stand it, Mrs. Fortescue ? But the way you ladies all travel about quite beats me. It is not right, you know. It is not right. Poor Miss Frost, that was very sad ! And where's Miss Susanna ?'

'Susanna does not think races right,' said Claude Fortescue slyly.

'Whe-ew !' from Threshie Reid.

'She was only not quite sure if her mother would approve,' interposed Lilian quickly. 'So she asked to have some young friends to spend the day with her instead, which I think she will like much better. She is always very anxious not to do what her mother would not like.'

'Now that her mother isn't there,' said Threshie Reid. 'That was a very 'cute move of Mrs. Betterton's, sending her away in charge of Miss Frost, though I can't understand how she'd the heart. Perhaps you're not aware that I am going to marry Miss Susanna. I'm sure she'd keep a tight hand over me, and I'm tired of keeping myself in check. I've saved all my salary, though, whilst I've been in Chungking—saved it entirely by not eating sausages.'

'We meet again, Mr. Reid,' said a small but high-toned voice. And there was Mrs. Stuckey,

The orbèd maiden  
With white fire laden  
Whom mortals call the moon!

'How are you, my dear Mrs. Fortescue? And Mr. Fortescue? Is Mr. Reid telling you that fable about his saving all his salary out of sausages?'

'I did indeed,' cried Threshie Reid. 'I used to have one or two for breakfast, or at odd times, and if anyone dropped in, you know, unexpectedly, there went a tin with mashed potatoes, as fellows have them, you know. Well, one day I calculated the price—the initial cost, the freight from England to Shanghai, from Shanghai to Ichang, from Ichang to Chungking—in short, what you could lay them down at there. Then I calculated how many I used per month. Why, it came to twice my salary in sausages alone. A man would have to be a sort of viceroy to stand it. So I forbade the boy to let a sausage look me in the face again, and—I saved my salary.'

'But you must have eaten something, you silly fellow.'

'No, I didn't. I always dined out when I was asked. And my boy used to give me some of his rice at other times.'

'Your boy! Well, you paid him for it.'

'No, I didn't. It was his own rice. He is not just an ordinary boy, you know. I call him my kwan-tsze—butler, steward, confidential adviser, all in one.'

'Oh my, Mr. Reid! Don't I wish I were your boy in the matter of wages, squeezes included, of course! But there's the saddling bell at last! I began to think these were races without any racing.'

'Where's Stuckey?' asked Claude Fortescue, as together he and Mr. Reid escorted the ladies to the railings.

'Don't ask me. I've known where nobody was but Stuckey for the last six months. So I said to him, "Do let us make a change somehow. Do let us neither of us know where the other is while we are in Shanghai!" So I don't even know where he is staying. I'm at the Astor House. But I really can't say if he is or not.'

The sun was shining brightly out of an unclouded sky. The crowds of Chinese spectators all round the course looked, as somebody has said, like 'a blue pincushion full of pins,' so great was the gathering of the blue gowns. And the colours of the jockeys shone out vividly in the bright sunshine, whilst there was the usual difficulty in getting the stubborn, intelligent little China ponies into line. For the ponies and dogs in China are all, like the Chinese themselves, quite unaccustomed to discipline, with opinions of their own—most sensible opinions too, when they are getting over the gigantic boulders and holes skirting the precipices of the Great Brick Tea Road or such like; but still not sharing their rider's opinions, which is all he wants on a racecourse. There was the usual number of false starts, the starters and the clerk of the course all much *en évidence*, and it was a very straggling line when they did get off, received by a prolonged roar of excitement from the outside Chinese, whilst the Europeans, or Westerns as they call themselves in China to include Americans, all craned their necks in silence, the men with the best opera glasses by degrees warming up and dropping words of encouragement or warning. A cream from the Leviathan Stables at once assumed the lead, with two rank outsiders close up behind, however. At the Widow's Monument the cream was still leading, a chestnut going up, and a spotted pony last. Coming round the bushes, the Leviathan Stables were still leading, but not much, whilst a brown pony, ridden by a blue and silver jockey, had got into second place. Entering the straight, the brown pony came to the front, and whilst the Leviathan Stables fell back, one of the outsiders again crept up. These three then came on with a rush, all three being pushed along at a tremendous pace, the brown winning on the post by a short head. The outsider was second, and the Leviathan Stables third. Great was the cheering among the men, and there was a regular stampede to shake hands with and congratulate both owner and rider, stable and jockey being alike popular.

'Now, let me look at some of these athletes,' said little Mrs. Stuckey. 'Remember I have not seen a decently made man since I left here.'

'What ! not Stuckey ?'

'Now, I did *not* marry my husband to use him as a lay figure. Oh, perhaps you are like Mr. Stuckey, and think I'm a fraud because I have not made a statue since I've been in China. No clay, no plaster, no marble, and no model ! Yet that man expects a statue. Say ! have you heard we're promoted, and going to Peking ? Well, I've managed that. Yes, I did. I marked two spots on a vase ; and I took them to represent the Inspector-General's eyes, and I sat and looked at them. I did it for half an hour every day. No good ! I stared for one hour. My brain reeled with willing. At last one day I fainted—then the telegram came. Oh, you will see great things. Mr. Stuckey is a man of *enormous* administrative ability. But we are not half doing it. We must go to the paddock, see the ponies, see the men who are to ride them, and decide who is to win.'

'Dear me ! we should all make a pot of money if we could do that,' laughed Threshie Reid.

'No, you may back my opinion if you like. I can't. I can only have the sympathetic thrill of victory. My whole strength has to be absorbed in willing. If I had money on, that would dissipate it.'

'May I take you into luncheon, Mrs. Fortescue ? I don't know if it is the right thing or not. But a man deserves some compensation who has served his time in Chungking. And you'll tell me if I don't do the right thing, won't you ? As for that little lady, she is mad, I believe.' Then he remembered again how he had called her husband mad, and felt he was already making a mess of it.

'I have often wondered how such an enthusiastic little genius would bear China,' said Lilian, smiling at his embarrassment. 'I am afraid it has not been very pleasant for her so far. But she has written me the most beautiful letters—only very odd. One was a most elaborate study of her husband's character. She fancies him a most remarkable man, beside whom she is only a flash in the pan. Now, I like Mr. Stuckey very much, and so does Mr. Fortescue ; but there does not seem to be anything very remarkable about him. And she must be a genius, I suppose, to have been chosen out of all the Americans by the President to make a colossal statue of Washington.'

‘Perhaps she made spots on a vase for his eyes. But—but excuse me, Mrs. Fortescue, is not this Russian salad something uncommonly good? There seems to be a savour—or flavour—or something quite—— And this champagne, isn’t it excellent? You’ll warn me if I seem to be taking too much, won’t you? You see, I’m only accustomed to champagne now dining with Taotais, when it would not be the proper thing not to do so. Why do you laugh?’

‘Why, you talk as if you had been brought up in the West of China, not spent eighteen months there. And I don’t believe you ever took too much wine in your life.’

‘Well, then, I’ve been mistaken very often. I’ve constantly thought lately I was taking more than was good for me.’

‘So you do, Threshie. A man of your complexion ought never to touch wine in this climate, certainly not while the sun shines,’ interposed Claude Fortescue.

‘And this is my first week in Shanghai. And I’ve been sustaining myself in my travels with warm Lao Chin! Kill-joy! But what grand doings you have been having at the Club lately!’

‘Have we?’

‘Haven’t you heard about last night?’

‘No, I never go there at night.’

‘Well, it wasn’t there exactly. But if Mrs. Fortescue will excuse me—one of the sailors from the Russian man-of-war was at the theatre, abominably drunk, and Harry Dolliboy, who was in the dress circle and noticed it, went out and told one of the policemen to remove him. Meanwhile, Papier-mâché, as they call him, came in with four or five young bloods, who had been dining at the club together. Papier-mâché was leaning against a pillar, and you know how tumbling to pieces he always looks. Well, as the policeman came into the house, the sailor, who was about as drunk as he could be, rolled off and under his seat, so that he could not be seen, and the policeman, who was under Dolliboy’s orders to arrest some one, went straight up to Papier-mâché and arrested him. There was a lively remonstrance, not to say a little bit of a scuffle. And at the end of the performance what does Papier-mâché do but walk up to the policeman outside the house, seize him by the collar, and shake him, and declare that was the way in which he had himself been handled. The policeman, who had found out by now the mistake he had made, was horribly frightened. Then the whole set of them

went back to the Club together, assured Papier-mâché he had been insulted, and that the honour of his nation was at stake, and he ought to get a public apology. So, between one and two in the morning, he drives off to the police station, and insists on being locked up for the night. He was not locked up, I believe, but they could not get him away till the inspector came in the morning, asked him in to have some coffee with them, and then told him his trap was there, as if it had just driven up. But there's to be no end of a row about it yet—a public trial, I believe, that his character may be solemnly cleared from the imputation of being the worse for liquor. His friends are very guarded. They all confine themselves to saying it was after dinner. I never saw a more absurd scene than the whole thing was at the theatre—worth going for, which the play was not. But you heard about the other affair, when the Russian admiral had a great dinner? No! Not how one of the racing men, not out of mischief at all, I believe—but I really don't know, though—was treating all the Russian band to drinks, when in came an officer. I don't know whether he had been dining with the admiral or not, but with him was the man they call Money Bags, that Moscow banker's son. The racing man offered them drinks. The Russian officer signified that he'd had more than he could carry already. The racing man laughed. The officer hit at him, or something. That does not seem to have been much. One of the boating men, a huge, powerful fellow, seized the Englishman, pinioning him with his arms behind. That was quite right, and he was a plucky fellow; for the racing man's blood was up, and he was going to hit the Russian officer, and he'd have hit hard, and there'd have been a regular free fight; when what does that Money Bags do? With the Englishman's arms pinioned, and him powerless, he hits him in the face! Then the other fellow went for him. And he fled howling into the very room where the admiral was still dining. There's to be no end of a business over that too. And you mean you had not heard of it?'

'No, even in this focus of dissipation you have no idea how calmly one can pursue the even tenor. It is you fellows who come down from the country who make all the gossip; and the men from over the waters who make the rows, it seems. It is not we quiet Shanghai people. But since you are disposed to be so communicative, what is the true history of the Ichang riot? It always strikes me as the most inexplicable of



the lot, especially with that extraordinary theatrical sort of announcement afterwards that there were to be no more riots, an announcement which has so far proved perfectly correct.'

'Oh, it was a regular got-up thing, if ever anything was,' said Mr. Reid in his loud voice, going at it full tilt. 'It was all over in twenty minutes, every foreigner's house in the place burnt down. "Where does your master keep his money?" they asked at each house. "He doesn't keep any. When he wants money he sends to the bank for it." "Very well, where is your petroleum tin, then?" and they set fire to the house with it. You heard of Everett putting on his consular cap—he hadn't time for the uniform, I understood—and sitting on alone in the Consulate?'

'Yes, it was grand!' said Lilian, her eyes glistening.

'His servants, constable and all, every man jack of them, decamped, only sending him occasional messages that he must fly for his life. But Everett wouldn't budge. It was like the Roman senators in the forum, wasn't it?—till some one pulled some one's beard. No one pulled Everett's, or rather not his cap. But they knocked off the great General Lo's. That the Chinese speak of with bated breath. They think it a great deal more dreadful than burning the houses, little children being just saved by being snatched out of their baths and carried off wrapped in towels, and the Roman Catholic Sisters thrown bleeding into the river bed. Some of the children in their orphanage must have been burnt, if not many—if not many,' repeated Threshie Reid.

'Yes, but what is the true inwardness of it? Was it anti-missionary, got up by a secret society, or what?'

'My dear fellow, the chapels and schools weren't touched; the missionary services have been going on just the same ever since, only without any Europeans, of course. No, that anti-missionary talk is all my eye, in my opinion. The Chinese don't care. They'd give each of our sects a province to convert to-morrow, for a consideration. It is the foreign customs, that's what it is. Why, now that Chungking is an open port, every junk between Ichang and Chungking that flies a foreign flag, pretending to be chartered by one or other of the great Shanghai firms, avoids paying local dues. The foreign customs collect all the duty that is paid, and it goes right away, most part of it, while all the little local petty officials, men of letters, who have passed their examinations and can't turn their hands to anything, are left starving to stare at the

foreigners coming up with their big salaries—nothing in Chungking good enough for them ! Of course they feel disposed to get up riots. Then think of the feelings of a patriotic Chinaman—and, mind you, there must be such—seeing a foreign flag run up at every Likin station, and Kwei Fu and the other towns that lived by the collection of duties left high and dry. When they get up a riot—which I always think is the best organised, most orderly thing in China—they use all the inflammatory material they can, of course, and put out proclamations against the missionaries—oh ! I have seen them of a most disgraceful nature—but that alone would prove to me that missionaries have nothing to do with the riots. They never mention the foreign customs, now do they ?

‘Why, to do so would be to fight against the Emperor himself. It is all very well to call them foreign customs. The Emperor is the head of them. It would be a revolution—declared.’

‘Yes ; and perhaps you have noticed the Chinese generally prefer not to be so very explicit. But just think what one of the Chinese commissioners—first-class mandarins, some of them—must think of the so-called foreign commissioners—commissioners without any commissions—when he sees them in the inferior post, his subordinates, in receipt of twice or even three times such a salary as he gets !’

‘Mr. Reid, I have been listening spellbound,’ said Mrs. Stuckey, her great luminous eyes fixed upon his face. ‘And I have a favour to ask of you. Will you sit to me as Hercules cleansing the stables of Augeus ? I have never done a statue in action so far. And Hercules has never been represented active.’

‘Why, have I been thumping the table too much ? I asked you to tell me if I didn’t behave,’ with a reproachful glance at Lilian. ‘Why, there’s the Consul-General, and I haven’t reported myself.’

‘He is splendid,’ sighed Mrs. Stuckey, as Mr. Reid left them. ‘I have enjoyed every minute of his conversation, his gestures are so free. Why, if there isn’t Mr. Stuckey looking at the ponies ! Just what I meant to do,’ and she went off to join him.

‘Do you think Mr Reid really believes he has been living on nothing a year ?’ asked Lilian of her husband.

‘Impossible to tell what a man believes after a term of Chungking !’

'Did you find it so very lone—so very dreadful?' asked she, slipping her hand through his arm. It was the first time they had ever spoken alone together of Chungking. To other people they had spoken of it in each other's presence. But they together to one another never.

'I found it both very lonely and very dreadful,' said Mr. Fortescue, looking somewhat gravely at her.

'If we were there together!'

'Sweetheart! Together! Why, Chungking would be paradise. Or any place where we could be quite alone together, sure of never seeing anyone else again.'

'That is the reason we came to the races, I suppose,' said Lilian, with that little fine smile that seemed to owe more to the exquisite curves of her lips than to any inward merriment. 'And why you asked Mr. Reid to luncheon. But Susanna will like to hear about her mother. How picturesque this grouping is! I think I like this better than the races, these tall Sikh policemen, with their brilliant-coloured turbans like so many big tulips, and those blue-jackets, and then all those crowds of Chinese. Let us go round and look at them.'

Just then Mr. Cunningham came up, and said he must point out to her the most remarkable man in China—the one man who had made money by writing a book upon it. 'As Mr. Fortescue can tell you, most books written upon China are given away, and only paid for by their writers.'

'Are they, Claude?'

Mr. Fortescue smiled a somewhat expressive smile. 'I have not written—a book yet.'

'But did that old gentleman sell a *great* many copies?' asked Lilian.

'He sold five—in Shanghai.'

'Well, then?'

'Five hundred went down in the P. and O. They were all insured at a little over their cost value. And that was the best sale a book upon China ever made. But you are not going before the Taotai's Cup, I hope. The Taotai himself is just coming in with all his retinue. It is better than anything you will see upon the London stage.'

Her husband had been looking forward to showing it to her, but he now stood by and let Mr. Cunningham explain the motley procession, as it filed past with all its uncouth pageantry; how these were the executioners with the high conical hats, these men carried all the Taotai's titles, each

man one on a board. Happiest of all looked the beggar boys, who marched in front, the reeves, pheasant feathers stuck in their caps considerably longer than themselves. 'But I always forget you have been up country and seen it all before,' he finished in a tone of vexation.

'You could not put it on the London stage so ragged, though, could you?' said Lilian, without exactly answering, being, indeed, lost in contemplation of the mediæval scene, not painted, but living and moving before her, carrying the mind back so far across the centuries, as scenes in China are constantly doing, till sometimes one feels in the fifteenth century, sometimes in the thirteenth, occasionally in the days of Pompeii, and even sometimes reading the inscriptions on the memorial arches, transported to beyond the Fall, when our ancestors all lived in Paradise.

'No, of course, those are all beggars and street rowdies, who only slip their official finery over their rags. What are you smiling at, Fortescue?'

'I was thinking how many apparently Christian gentlemen are only savages with all their heathen rags on underneath, if we had the eyes to see them. And the racecourse presented such an odd appearance for a minute. But did you see those two ladies just now, as the Taotai's procession went up to the grand stand, stand right in his way, so that the Taotai could hardly get by? And one of them said, "Chinese coming in here! I don't think this ought to be allowed." And the other said to some man with her, "Turn them out! Order them off!" It is the American Consul's wife and Mrs. Robinson from Hankow, where, you know, the Chinese are always ordered off the footpath by the river, and not allowed on the racecourse, I believe. I think I ought to go and speak. Will you come, Lilian?'

'Mr. Cunningham can take care of me,' said Lilian, turning away, though very gently. 'I want to ask you to dine with us to meet the Stuckeys before she starts to speak to the Chinese Emperor soul to soul.'

'With pleasure! A lady with a mission indeed!' And then even to them came the news that had been making its way all round the racecourse, leaving grave faces everywhere—the popular broker, Shanghai's representative man, as we have sometimes called him, had died quite suddenly that morning.

People went home from the racecourse somewhat thoughtfully.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

## A SNAKE IN THE GRASS

He who has a thousand friends has not a friend to spare,  
And he who has one enemy will meet him everywhere.

EMERSON, *Omar Chiam*.

'ISN'T Fortescue a good deal changed by marriage?' asked Threshie Reid, after he and the Consul-General had exchanged preliminary greetings and inquiries.

'Ah! you notice it, do you? I don't know. I am not—not quite comfortable about Fortescue. He used to be all quip and quiddity. No quips and quiddities now; always hanging upon his wife's face.'

'Well, it is a very beautiful one.'

'Yes, he has that excuse.'

'My dear Ashley, aren't you taking things rather seriously?'

'Well, I'll tell you how it is. Of course I wouldn't tell everyone. But you are in the service, and it is in confidence, of course.'

Mr. Reid nodded.

'The truth is, I think he has something on his mind, something he is trying to conceal. And I am afraid I know what it is. I married them, you know.'

'Oh, you married them!' It was remarkable to observe how Mr. Reid had discharged all expression out of his face. He had only grown very red in the effort. Otherwise no Neapolitan thief, past master in the art, could have done it better.

'Yes, it was all in a great hurry. There was some idea of his being sent off at once to Kiukiang. And what I understood, but I really don't know how I heard it, was that she had been sent down by her aunt up country, a missionary, to marry Fortescue. Of course I thought I knew all about him, trusted him. She was under age. But she was staying with missionaries here. I thought she was one of the lot. Mrs. FitzHugh was an old friend, who seemed to understand all about it. They had all come out from England together. And I asked no questions.'

'Ah, you asked no questions.' In a more suspicious man his absolute want of expression would have aroused attention. But Mr. Ashley was not suspicious, nor apt to be observant of

his neighbour's countenance any more than the average Englishman, who yet would think scorn not to notice when a horse puts back its ears or a dog wags its tail.

'No! In a laughing sort of way I said to Fortescue something about settlements, and I remember his answer, something about the last Married Women's Property Act securing a woman's money to herself after marriage, as it does. But the long and the short of it is he married a girl not twenty-one without even asking the consent of her guardian. There's a man here now knows the guardian, met him after the marriage had occurred, but before he had even heard a word of it. And the girl turns out to be the daughter of that Grey in the Diplomatic Service who died of yellow fever in Rio, a very distinguished man indeed. His second wife was a German countess, who was lady in waiting in the late King of Hanover's court. And the girl's grandmother was one of the Drummonds, related to all the Drummonds. As far as I make out now, she has at least a thousand pounds a year.'

'Yes, I know she has,' said Threshie Reid. 'More than that, indeed.'

'Why, how do you know it?'

'From her cousin, Mrs. Betterton, who is a great friend of mine.'

'What, the aunt who sent her down to get married?'

'She didn't! She is her cousin, mind you, not her aunt. But she never heard a word of it till it was all over.'

'Well, then, I think it was a—very ungentlemanly thing of Fortescue to do,' said the Consul-General, going nearer to an oath than he had done for many a long day. 'And I'm uncommonly sorry I had anything to do with it. Why, I'm not sure it is not contrary to law. Thank goodness, she was not a ward in Chancery!'

Threshie Reid was silent. This in itself was so phenomenal an occurrence that it at last arrested even Mr. Ashley's attention, and made him feel still more uncomfortable.

'I say, by the way, you won't repeat what I've been telling you.'

'Not a word—unless to Mrs. Betterton. I might feel it my duty to tell her. But Fortescue is a perfectly honourable man where money is concerned. You might trust him with untold gold. I hope you might any of us, but certainly Fortescue.'

'But why hurry so, then? It was hardly decent. Why consult no one? It is getting talked about—a good deal talked about, I believe. Even at the Club bar I hear it has been mentioned. And I am sorry it should be a man in our service.'

Threshie Reid was dumb. But it seemed it was a good deal talked about. At the house at which he was dining that night, that and the broker's sudden death seemed to divide the honours of the conversation with the races.

'Well, we all know the reason of the hurry, I think,' said Mrs. Robinson, shrugging her shoulders. It seemed other people did not know, and she did not explain at the dinner table; but Mr. Reid felt it borne in upon him that by the time the gentlemen joined the ladies every woman at that party would have heard her version. As to himself, he divulged nothing, though he did not know whether it might not be better to clear Fortescue from the other, in men's eyes, so much worse imputation. But he remembered Lilian's face, and he could not bring himself even to drop a suggestive 'I think there might be other reasons for Fortescue's hurrying his wedding.' It seemed like treason against her even to speak of such a thing. So he sat and swelled with indignation at the remarks made on his brother Consul till the conversation turned.

'Poor old daddy!' said one man. 'He was a good sort. But I've seen he has been breaking up for some time past.'

Yes, they'd all seen it, they said. 'The cleverest and best read man in Shanghai,' said another. 'And the best fellow, take him all round.'

'Yes, the best fellow. I don't believe he had an enemy in the place. We sha'n't look upon his like again in a hurry. There are none of the young fellows growing up like him.'

'Well, perhaps it is just as well,' said another, a new comer this. 'Are you backing Petronel? There's a horse a young fellow in our office has got hold of, a queer sort of a strawberry——'

'Did he know he was dying, do you think?'

'Not in the least. Just didn't feel well, he said. Old Rogers went in to see him. They always took a cocktail together at the same hour every day—done it for years past, to the minute. He was leaning back in his armchair. "What! am I late?" he said. "Sorry. But I feel so tired. I

think I'd like to rest—altogether,” and with that he was dead. How old was he?’

‘Over fifty.’

‘Fifty!’ the other man stared astonished. ‘Sixty! Seventy!’

‘No, fifty. Some men age fast. He was younger than you and I are.’

Then they joined the ladies.

‘It is only a pity they are not happier together,’ shrugged Mrs. Robinson, as the gentlemen filed sheepishly in one after another. ‘But I always saw she was a little simpleton in spite of her pretty face. As to him, poor man, he looks perfectly wretched. She keeps him tied to her apron-strings, I hear. I understand I am the first lady he ever left her side to speak to. Greatly honoured, I’m sure. And what do people make of Mrs. Stuckey?’

She was told none knew what to make of her, but they all agreed that he looked fat and rosy. People hoped to meet them at Mrs. FitzHugh’s.

Everyone laughed at but everyone seemed to like Mrs. FitzHugh. She was so good-natured, they all said.

Mrs. Robinson laughed too, but even she did not say anything against Mrs. FitzHugh.

‘The most hospitable, kindly, genial fellow! Helped everyone right and left. There’s many a broker in the Western Ghauts will rue the day——’

‘In the Western Ghauts?’

‘Yes, the China houses where the broken-down men live. He’d always some dollars for a friend.’

‘I back Petronel——’

‘I say, I hear there’s a strawberry——’

‘Oh, nonsense! a young fellow’s one pony is always a Phoenix.’

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### HIS RACE WAS RUN

He loved the Dean (I lead a heart),  
But dearest friends, they say, must part.  
His time was come; he ran his race;  
We hope he’s in a better place.—SWIFT.

It was very early in the afternoon, as nearly at the luncheon hour as it well could be, the broker’s funeral, so as to distract



people from the races as little as possible. The ladies had all just come out from luncheon, as also the men who had been lunching with them. The other men, who had had no ladies and trooped in by themselves, had not come out yet when the long procession began to file past. There had been an article in the morning paper in which the profound grief into which Shanghai had been plunged struggled with the brilliant sunshine with which it had been flooded the day before, and the extraordinary success of the racing. He had been written of as a representative man, the friend of all in distress, the most upright, the most honourable, a leading member of the community. And now every corporate body in the place had turned out to do him honour. There were the volunteers, for had he not years ago been a volunteer, and joined the home guard directly that had been started in the riot scare? There was the fire brigade, for had he not been one of them? There was the town band, which had left the racecourse for the express purpose of following the funeral, and now summoned everyone to the far side of the course by its melancholy strains. The Municipal Council were necessarily there, individually and representatively, for for some years he had been a member of the Council, though not of recent date. The Freemasons also claimed him as their own, and were represented, although he had never been an active member of any lodge. The one gunboat in harbour sent a detachment of marines and blue-jackets as a compliment to Shanghai, and the Consul-General himself took the captain with him in his carriage. Only the Young Men's Christian Association and the Asiatic Society were conspicuous by their absence; and there was not a single missionary present at the funeral. But the Cathedral clergyman officiated, and nearly every merchant in the place attended; whilst not a broker was missing from the company around the grave. Needless to say, the leading broker himself attended in person, though amongst such a gorgeous and distinguished company the corpse often gets somewhat overlooked. But one or two men with rather wet eyes missed his spirit greatly, as they thought of the little comments he would have made upon the proceedings, and almost heard his voice saying them, as they had heard it, indeed, but two days before at the Club bar. 'Nobody would have been more cut up than he would have been to spoil the races so,' men said, as they hurried back to the course, some of them still in funeral black.

But as the melancholy strains from the town band died away in the distance, the first afternoon race was being run, people flocking back from looking at the funeral to the rails.

‘A curious-coloured pony!’ remarked Mr. Stuckey.

A very tall young fellow, with a glowing face, was patting a strawberry pony, and generally assisting to settle himself in the saddle, a young fellow in a remarkably ill-fitting jockey get-up, a red cap, and black, red, and white jacket.

‘Why, that’s young Field in my handkerchief!’ exclaimed Mrs. Stuckey. ‘Have you made yourself a cap out of it? But you’re never going to ride, are you?’

‘I’m going to try,’ said the young fellow, hardly venturing to look up, his face all smiles and blushes. Never till the last moment had he known if he’d got leave from Wuhu, and his clothes had all been contrived on the way down, he was so very small. ‘I say, O’Callaghan, don’t let her jerk her head so.’

‘You hold on by the knees, old boy. Shall I wax them? I say, don’t you use a whip till you get to the bushes, whatever you do—and—and——’ The other directions were inaudible, the strawberry continuing alternately to rear and jerk its head in a manner apparently most bewildering to the rider.

‘Say, Stuckey, if that child is killed, whatever will you do? Mrs. Field is a widow, and do you remember her last letter?’

‘I do,’ said Mr. Stuckey gravely. ‘If I had had the least idea of this, I would never have given young Field leave. But don’t say a word now. It is all we can do. I suppose O’Callaghan has picked him out as the lightest weight for that creature to throw.’

But Mrs. Stuckey was not listening. Her lamps of eyes were fixed upon the young boy’s beaming, flushing face, her little hands tight clasped. Wherever that strawberry jumped and jerked, there was Mrs. Stuckey not far off, gazing at its rider, till she found herself at last squeezed under a big German’s arm; he having good-naturedly let her slip in right up against the railing just by the starting-point. Twice there was a false start, all because of that strawberry. And the men round were getting impatient, and young O’Callaghan biting his lip with a feverish spot of colour in his cheeks. ‘Petronél! Petronél!’ shouted the crowd. He was German owned, as well as first favourite.

Mrs. Stuckey never spoke nor moved. At last they were really off.

'Oh! he is forcing him! he is forcing him!' cried young O'Callaghan in a tone of despair, dropping his opera-glass, and turning his back upon the field.

'Don't you see he can't go slower?' said Lillian's soft, clear tones. 'Your horse can't go slower.'

Mr. O'Callaghan, who had never even been introduced, just looked up at her with one half-terrified glance of surprise, and then turned to the course again, his opera-glass to his eyes, but shaking so he could hardly see through it. It was a mile race for *bonâ fide* griffins, and seven ponies had started for it. But from the first it appeared that the race was only between Petronel and the strange strawberry. The strawberry had walked away at first, but now steadily but surely Petronel seemed gaining.

'Petronél! Petronél!' shouted the Germans. 'Go it Struwe! Go it! Go it!'

'Petronel! Petronel!' shouted the English, a note higher, but not with such a powerful diapason.

No one shouted for the strawberry. Only young O'Callaghan stood and trembled. Lillian heard his teeth chatter. She knew he could not see through those huge opera-glasses he was holding up rather to hide his face than for any good they could do him.

'Petronel is gaining,' she said gently. 'But Mr. Field has not used his whip yet.' Mr. O'Callaghan gave her another look, almost as if he could hug her this time.

Mrs. Stuckey never spoke, only moved as the ponies moved, her eyes fixed, unblinking.

At the Monument Petronel was leading. Hats were waved, handkerchiefs flashed out. Petronel was the pony upon which the German community had from the first placed their highest hopes and staked their stakes.

Another pony was coming up now. A pony with a purple and gold rider was getting even with the strawberry; neck and neck the two were coming on together by the green bushes, Petronel well in front. But what was it? Was Petronel's jockey flogging him? Could it be Petronel was showing signs of distress? Anyhow, at that fatal turn some change seemed to occur, and as they came out into the straight, young Field could be seen using his whip. The strawberry made one great bound, and shot ahead. 'Petronél! Petronél!' shouted the Germans in tones of despair. 'Give her her head,

Struwe! Flog her!’ Men mounted on the railings to adjure the jockey. But the strawberry came on with its long stride, and won the race by a couple of lengths, amidst loud cheers, mingled with groans of distress, having beaten the record and done the mile in 2 min. 8 sec. Mr. O’Callaghan was off like a shot to welcome his pony and champion; and little Field was lifted off amongst an admiring group of young men.

In the confusion none hardly noticed that little Mrs. Stuckey had fainted. But her husband was by her side, and he took her away at once.

‘You did not go to the funeral, Fortescue?’

‘No, I did not know him. D.T. was it?’

‘Oh, no. Not every man whom drink kills dies of D.T. Now, Mrs. Fortescue, how are you going to keep young O’Callaghan from breaking out to-night? I have seen you watching him with great interest during this race. And little Field, too! Every man here will want to stand them both a drink.’

‘I never thought of that,’ said Lilian. ‘But he seemed so anxious, I could not help feeling for him, and I am so glad he has won. It was his only pony, you see. But you don’t think he’ll go and drink now, do you?’ she asked anxiously.

‘He was half drunk already.’

‘With excitement. Only with excitement,’ said Mr. Fortescue.

And that was all young O’Callaghan got drunk with that race meeting. Her face steadied him, and reminded him he was responsible for Field, who came from the same part of Ireland, and was younger than he, and so small. The two young fellows went away as sober as judges, but so wild with joy none believed it of them. When anyone offered young O’Callaghan a drink that day, he remembered Lilian’s pure face, and her kind eyes looking down on him; even the very tones of her voice had purity in them. ‘Oi dare not trust meself. Oi’m that drunk already,’ was what he said, however, and people believed it of him. As to young Field, he was chiefly intent on getting the strawberry put up comfortably, and himself out of his ill-fitting, shivery clothes. ‘I say, my arm is nearly out of the socket,’ he said, ‘and I think a warm bath is about the thing for me.’

Men wanted him to ride again next day, but he was the only son of his mother, and such a little one. He knew what she felt about him. ‘No, I rode for O’Callaghan,’ he said.

'But I don't ride again. My arm is out, I tell ye, and I'm pretty well done.'

So they went to bed early that night and dreamed delightful dreams. If it could only always have been so!

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## CHAPTER XXXV

### THE SKELETON IN THE CUPBOARD

So true is the observation of Confucius, that we take greater pains to persuade others that we are happy than in endeavouring to think so ourselves.—GOLDSMITH.

MR. REID arrived early to luncheon. He had asked for a private interview with Susanna, saying he had many messages and grave instructions to give her from her mother. But Susanna received him looking so uncommonly like a young lady, with her figure so developed, and her hair done up, that poor Mr. Reid felt quite shy at first. Born and bred in China, the only effect the climate had upon her seemed to be in the way of over-development. Lilian had been alarmed at her precocity, and sent her now daily to the Convent School, that she might be as much with other children as possible. But they were all China bred, and young ladies. Susanna did not seem to become more juvenile under their influence. The child who had left Chungking her mother would never see again. But it was evident from her own absolute want of shyness that she had not quite attained to young-ladyhood yet. She was quite without self-consciousness. And she did not put on any air of being more interested in what Mr. Reid told her than she really was. It appeared that she was wholly absorbed in her own life, and that while very ready to tell about that to her mother, and even to consult her—at a distance—the idea that her mother and brother had a life of their own was even distasteful to her. She evidently could not imagine any life going on quite apart from her own personality. Mr. Reid felt disappointed. He had completely entered into Mrs. Betterton's motherly anxieties, and promised to affect Susanna, and now he felt powerless to do so. She sat before him, a very fine young woman, with a bright colour, and her eyes shining, as she looked at him, but quite unmoved. Was Mark grown? Oh, was he really? Mother

had said so. But she supposed he was still little Mark. Would mother like to send him down to Shanghai for her to take care of? 'I would be very good to him if she did—not as I used to be,' said Susanna with a blush.

But when he came to talk about her own life she was quite different, and at once became full of animation. She seemed delighted with the presents that had been sent her, and thanked him profusely for the Buddha's hands that he had brought down, candied, in a bottle for her. 'They taste just like citron,' she said, 'and they do look so very curious. I shall give one to Cousin Lilian for her dinner parties; for I always dine downstairs at parties now, so that I shall hear what the people will say about it.'

Then he told her her mother was rather uneasy lest she was staying too long with the Fortescues. They might be finding her in their way, and Mrs. Betterton wanted to know if they never talked of sending her to school.

'Now, whether they find me in the way or not, I can't possibly know,' said Susanna with perfect candour. 'For one thing is quite certain, that if they did ever so much, they would never let me know, not either of them. But as there is no reason why they should not send me to school if they wished, and mother herself suggested it, I suppose they don't mind having me here. I do go to the French Sisters every day, but that is not to learn, it is to meet other children. Cousin Claude said he thought his conversation was too improving for me. It is very improving, I think, don't you?'

Mr. Reid did not know that he had thought about it, but certainly Mr. Fortescue was reckoned a very clever man.

'I think him a wonderfully clever man,' said Susanna, 'quite wonderfully clever. Sometimes when they have visitors I can sit and listen without talking, because nobody speaks to me. I like that much—much better than when somebody makes baby sort of talk on purpose for me, as they do sometimes. But then I always listen to Cousin Claude, and when he goes on for some time, do you know, my head quite aches with stretching to take it all in. Sometimes, indeed, I get so tired I just go to bed; for if I don't understand all he says now, I try to recollect it all, that I may understand it some day. Some people, I know, say Cousin Claude is not a Christian. But, do you know, I think he is inspired, only then I understand quite.'

Threshie Reid began to be afraid that by the time Susanna

was a little more grown up, she would be a great deal too superior for him. He had talked laughingly of marrying her yesterday. His speech now struck himself as the height of impertinence. Why, Susanna would never think of him a year or two hence. However, he continued to do his duty, and supposed she was quite happy there.

'I don't know if anyone is quite happy,' said Susanna gravely; then, on a little pressure from him, said, 'Why, look at Cousin Lilian. You'd think she might be happy, but is she?'

'Isn't she? How do you know she isn't?' asked the big man, growing a little pale. It was a very tender feeling he entertained for the girl he had known at Chungking, the lovely young girl who had looked in his face with such child-like directness, and whom he, as her Consul, had almost ordered off down river—to marry Claude Fortescue, before anyone knew what she was doing. And he had feared she was not happy directly he caught sight of her sweet, pale face once again.

'Why, I *see* it,' said Susanna downrightly. 'She says good-bye to Cousin Claude when he goes to his office, with that sweet little smile of hers, and she stands quite still, looking after him, and then, as he goes out of sight, the smile goes away, and as often as not there are the tears rolling down her cheeks, and her hands tight clasped. Then she sits quite still. And I say nothing. I did kiss her once or twice at first, but it did no good. Then presently she looks up, her face set to look bright again. "Susanna," she says,' continued Susanna, imitating Lilian's made-up-to-be-cheerful voice. 'I don't say it is always so. But Cousin Lilian is *not* happy, and as long as she is not, I can't be quite happy either, for I do love Cousin Lilian.'

'And why do you think it is?' asked Threshie Reid very bashfully, for he did not know if he ought to inquire of a child. But then Susanna looked so unlike a child, and he had promised Mrs. Betterton to let her know if he could, for she also had judged from Lilian's letters that she was not happy, that there was something wrong.

Susanna shook her head. 'I *can't* think why it is,' she said. 'You'd say she had everything to make her happy, and yet Cousin Lilian is not the kind of person to be unhappy without a reason. She never complains,' said Susanna almost fiercely. 'She always talks as if she were very happy—very,

very happy. But I think she has something on her mind, something that is always there, and that she is trying to hide, for she is not the same Lilian she used to be, not at all.'

'Not at all,' echoed Threshie Reid.

'Then you see it too?' cried Susanna disconcerted. 'I hoped you would say I was quite wrong.'

'But what can she have to hide? And who is she hiding it from?' persisted the Consul.

'Why, Cousin Claude, of course. *Of course,*' persisted Susanna. 'Doesn't she always smile as long as he is there? And then when he comes home, and finds her with a pretty colour—that's when she has been crying—and says, "What a bright colour you have! Have you been asleep, dearest?" she says quite dreamily, as if she were not sure, "I don't think—I—have—been asleep." Sometimes I can hardly help saying, "Why, you know you haven't."'

'And you have never told Mr. Fortescue that—that his wife has been crying?'

'I don't think that would be right, would it,' asked Susanna, 'when Cousin Lilian doesn't want him to know?'

'I don't suppose she wants me to know, poor dear!' said the big man pathetically.

'It isn't you she is trying to hide it from. And then I told you, I suppose,' said Susanna, growing very red lest she should have committed some indiscretion, 'because I forgot you weren't the Consul here. When you were Consul in Chungking, mother always looked upon you as the person to tell things to, and to help in every way. And I know it is in that way I have *always* looked on you.'

'I wish I could help now, I'm sure,' said Mr. Reid, more gratified by this frank, spontaneous testimony from a child than it would be easy to describe, for he had lived a lonely life for many years, first in one port, then in another, doing, without counting the cost, all the many little kindnesses that came in his way, but this was the first time he had ever heard that his kindly nature had been appreciated by others.

Then Lilian came into the room, and in her gentle presence both the others felt like guilty conspirators before her. But Mr. Reid thought again how greatly she was altered from the candid girl-child who had looked up into his face with her clear eyes, and listened to his views at Chungking, and sometimes combated them; whilst Susanna felt as if she and Mr.



Reid had now a secret together, and felt more grown-up than ever in consequence.

Mr. Reid now proceeded to give them information about their Chungking friends. Dr. Maxwell, he said, had become a Freethinker. 'I always thought he was too good a doctor for a missionary. But now he says dreadful things, rams Herbert Spencer and Huxley down your throat, whether you will or no, which I call worse than giving you bad wine, you know.'

'But what does his wife think?'

'What do any women think of the opinions of the men they marry? I am sure I don't know. As Miss Pearce she was a hard-working missionary. And I believe she is still. So is he as far as physicking the people goes. Mr. Jenkins has joined an American mission, where he gets better pay, and there are a Mr. and Mrs. Selkirk come out, who seem splendid people. But they have started a branch mission out in the wilds, which they have no business to do, and where they are sure to be killed if they stay long enough. Miss Alger, I suppose you know, is married, and settled higher up the river; a very hard-working man, her husband; does real good work, I fancy. His father was a blacksmith, and he goes at the Chinese hammer and tongs. Mr. and Mrs. Wilcocks are still there, still working, and always in poor health. Then there came up a man to join them as a colporteur, who seemed to me very unsatisfactory. He was in Shanghai in business—could not get on, and very badly thought of, I hear. All on a sudden he turned up as a colporteur. Coal porter he'd be more suitable for. Mrs. Betterton is unhappy about it, I know. Mr. Wilcocks says, in that sanctimonious voice of his, with its Chungking wail, "One can never account for the workings of the Spirit." But Mrs. Betterton says, "No; but one must not always expect miracles." Mrs. Betterton and I are great friends. Oh, I've become very serious whilst I have been in Chungking.'

'Susanna contends you are a Freethinker,' said Mr. Fortescue.

'A Freethinker!' cried Threshie Reid, growing purple with indignation. 'I'm sure I never was such a thing in all my born days. But Mrs. Betterton's conversation has had a great effect upon me certainly.'

'Then she has converted one Chungking Consul,' said Claude Fortescue. But this was in an undertone.

Then Mr. and Mrs. Stuckey came in, and joined the party

at luncheon. She seemed in a strangely excited state, and apparently the main spring of her excitement was the disgraceful way in which little Mrs. Smith from Hankow was flirting.

‘Oh, but I am so sorry for her,’ said Lilian. ‘She is quite young, and not very wise, and her husband is not very nice to her, I am afraid.’

‘No, he drinks, and he is unfaithful!’

‘Well, then——’ exclaimed Lilian, with a face of horror and uplifted hands.

‘That does not excuse her flirting in the way she does,’ said Mrs. Stuckey. ‘Though I should be the last woman in the world not to say it excused a great deal. Marriage is nothing but a social contract, I know, and when one party does not comply with the conditions, the other, of course, is free.’

‘Is not that rather a dangerous doctrine?’ asked Claude Fortescue.

‘Say rather a great preventive of danger,’ said the little American. ‘Oh, Mr. Stuckey was well posted in all my views before I married him, weren’t you, Stuckey?’ ‘Is it a time bargain, or for ever that you propose?’ I asked; then I asked again if it included the past. And when I heard it did, I said, ‘I’ll take care of your future, then.’

‘I don’t quite understand about including the past,’ said Threshie Reid. ‘If an unmarried man may make bold to inquire——’

‘Why, I’ve no objection to a widower,’ said Mrs. Stuckey. ‘But I should object to finding out after I’d married that there was some one else I had never been told one word about, who had done all the little things I did for my husband, only rather differently, in a past he meant me to have nothing to do with. Do you know, a missionary told me the other day of a Chinese convert who discarded his first wife, married before he was converted, and married a young girl at Peking, and brought her down to Shanghai with him. Both the women were Christians, and when they heard of each other, both were very unhappy, and so was the man then. He went and asked what mistake he had made; he had only wanted to do “all the same Englishman,” he said. No, I think the heathen Chinese’s view is the right one, and the number one wife’s the place of honour. A man should marry young, and it should be the first woman he lives with, and not just the last, whom

he should love and honour and live with for the rest of his days.'

'In that case you and I could never have married,' said her husband, 'for we never even met each other till we were both advanced in years.' He looked decidedly uncomfortable, and as if he wanted to turn the conversation, but Mrs. Stuckey seemed to be under the influence of some overpowering excitement, that prevented her from noticing that or anything else.

'Advanced in years! Only hear him! Wouldn't anyone think we were middle-aged? And I declare I'm only twenty-six, after all.'

Whilst she was speaking, Mr. Stuckey had poured out a glass of wine, and as if absently put it almost under Claude Fortescue's hand, instead of by his own plate. 'But you've lived so fast, my dear, you are much more like thirty-six.' Then in an aside, 'Try that wine, Fortescue; I am not sure it is all right.'

But Mr. Fortescue did not lift the glass of wine to his lips. The indisposition of which Mr. Stuckey, sitting next him, had first become aware from seeing the growing earnestness and alarm in Mrs. Fortescue's eyes, seemed to have suddenly increased upon him. Lilian produced ether now, and began to apply restoratives. 'He will be all right directly. This is what the doctor recommends. It is merely a passing attack,' she said smiling. 'Susanna, dear, will you——'

Then Susanna conducted everyone into the drawing-room.

'Mr. Fortescue often has little attacks,' said she with great coolness, evidently taking her cue from her cousin.

Lilian followed them in a few minutes, looking, as Threshie Reid noticed with sorrow, as bright and composed as he had ever seen her, so that he could never have imagined there had been anything to alarm or distress her had he not been present in the dining-room but a few minutes before. Presently Mr. Fortescue followed her, looking pale and weary enough, but more distressed to have disturbed the party.

'What doctor do you consult?' asked Mr. Stuckey.

'Oh, I have not seen any doctor. It is nothing. After a lifetime in China a man cannot expect to be free from every ailment. I have a weak heart, I suppose. It is better than liver, anyway.'

'Did you notice that Mrs. Fortescue said, "This is what the doctor recommends," and that Fortescue said he had

consulted no doctor?' said Mr. Reid, as the two men walked away together.

'Ye-es, I noticed it,' said the other.

'Perhaps he is really very ill—more than he knows of—and she knows it, and it is that that's troubling her.'

'No-o, I don't think it is that,' said Mr. Stuckey.

'You see, too, there is something?'

'Certainly I do,' looking up with an air of surprise at being asked. Then, after a pause, 'Wasn't there some girl he lived with before he married? He can hardly have been seeing her again, can he?'

'Oh, no! no! Fortescue wouldn't do that.'

'Well, I wouldn't answer for him. These Sinologues have as queer ideas of duty as of everything else. So have all men queer ideas about such matters, when you come to inquire. It is not only they act strangely; they think strangely. But depend upon it, whatever has been wrong, she has heard of it, and she is just bearing it all alone, and it is breaking her heart.'

'You think so, too?' said Threshie, almost with a groan. He had never been in love with her exactly, for he had always felt that it was not only in the Chungking Consulate that Fortescue had been before him. But if it hadn't been for that—and to think that the girl he would himself so have idolised should be exposed to this! 'It is a strange world!' he said at last, grinding his teeth.

'It is, indeed. Thank God, I've married a wife who, whatever else she may do, will never break her heart over keeping anything to herself. I dare say you are surprised at the way in which Mrs. Stuckey talks. I am myself very often. But when you marry, let your marriage include your past, old fellow. Depend upon it, it is the only way to be ever really happy. I married as a widower, of course.' Then, as Mr. Reid began to laugh, 'You didn't know I had been married before? But I was—to a woman who fascinated me utterly. I thought I'd reclaim her. I didn't. There was no possibility of living with her. So my people shipped me off to China. A burnt child dreads the fire; and I never thought of a woman again till I met Mrs. Fortescue. My first wife was just dead then, and I offered to her. She refused me, for which, of course, I have every reason to be thankful to her now. Though I still think her—I think her,' said Mr. Stuckey, growing rather red, 'the holiest woman I have ever

met, and I don't care who knows it. And so now you know what, I believe, some people have called the mystery of my life. A poor sort of mystery !'

'I wonder you never tried for a divorce before that.'

'I was nineteen when I married. She was rather a well-known character. My people wouldn't have cared about the notoriety. No, my father disinherited me, and shipped me off. I don't know why I'm telling you all this now, except that I believe we men shrink from being thought better than we are. And at the same time I shouldn't like you to think I'd bamboozled Mrs. Stuckey. You know the story of my life now. But don't tell it again. Why don't you think of that Miss Betterton, by the way ? She seems a nice girl.'

'She's rather young, isn't she ?' stammered Mr. Reid.

'Ah, well, you can't have everything, you know. Thirteen ! No, you don't say so ! But she doesn't feel thirteen. And somehow I thought she looked as if she expected something of you. And I'm sure she'd feel flattered.'

Then Mr. Stuckey left him, and Threshie Reid sat at the club with a sheet of note paper, and pondered within himself. Should he write ?—

'MY DEAR MRS. BETTERTON,—Miss Susanna looks uncommonly well. She is such a big girl now, and so pretty, I could not say all you asked me, for I felt quite bashful, and as if she were a great deal more grown-up than I was. She seems very happy. As to Mr. and Mrs. Fortescue, I am afraid Stuckey is right, and that he has not made a clean breast of everything, but that she has somehow learnt the truth. Some unkind person, I suppose. She tries to look happy, but doesn't take in anyone. He had an attack of palpitations I didn't at all like the look of to-day. She seemed to know exactly what to do for him, and came in smiling as if nothing had happened, so that one could hardly believe one had seen that agonised terror in her eyes a minute or two before. Again, as I write, I think Stuckey is wrong, and that Fortescue is dying, and she knows it, and hasn't told him, as the only way of keeping him alive. But somehow I don't think it is that either. Only there is certainly something wrong.

'And now to turn to another subject. When Miss Susanna is older, would you object to me for a son-in-law ? I'm afraid she is too young to ask now, but I'm afraid, too, if I don't make haste, some other man will. So I'd like to have you on my side ; though I fancy Miss Susanna would take the

matter very much into her own hands. And m afraid she'll never think of me, when——

'But if it is my fate to marry Susanna, I suppose I shall, anyhow. And if it is hers to marry some one else, I suppose she will. People seem always to do what is ingrained in their characters. Who ever would think of Stuckey—after having had one escape, too—marrying a mad woman like that—a woman who says dreadful things, calculated to do untold mischief! Marriage merely a social contract, indeed!—a time bargain!' Then he thrust his unfinished letter into his pocket, and, like everyone else, decided it would be convenient to drop in at Mrs. FitzHugh's in passing for a cup of tea.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### FORESHADOWINGS

Love, are we drifting thoughtlessly apart?

They say it, but I will not deem it true—

I swerve not for a moment night or day.

Oh, say that thou remainest true in heart;

Oh, tell me, dearest, thou art steadfast too,

And drive my doubts for evermore away.

J. G. F. NICHOLSON.

'I CAN'T think what can have been the matter with Mrs. FitzHugh to-day. Her head must be getting quite turned,' said Lilian that evening to her husband. 'Do you know, after you went away, she suddenly set to and abused Mrs. G. J. Smith; reproached her with all her husband's misdeeds; told her they were all her fault, that he *had* been fond of her, and she might have made something of him, and that now what she'd got to do was to go straight home, and see if she couldn't possibly get him to care for her again. I never saw such a scene. All her brogue came back, and Mrs. FitzHugh behaved like an Irish fishwife. Her language was quite coarse, and she actually told Mrs. Smith quite out before all of us that her husband was unfaithful to her, and everyone knew it. Fortunately there were not many people there.'

'And what did Mrs. G. J. Smith do?'

'She cried, and she tried to answer Mrs. FitzHugh. And then she cried again. And at last she flounced out of the room, declaring she'd never speak to one of us again for not taking her part. But no one could say anything. Mrs.

FitzHugh never paused for a moment. She seemed to say just anything—sometimes too ridiculous things. Then, when Mrs. G. J. Smith went away, she just fanned herself and said, "Well, I've got rid of her, anyhow. Will anyone have some more tea? I'm quite thirsty," and never apologised to anyone for what really was a most painful scene.'

'Poor child! I'm sorry you came in for it. But Mrs. G. J. must have done something to provoke such an outbreak.'

'No, indeed! That is the odd part of it. And the way I know is, because she had been sitting quite quietly talking to me. I felt so sorry for her, because none of the other ladies would speak to her when she came in.'

'And what was she talking about?'

'I really hardly know. She has a way of meandering on. I fancy she really is very stupid. But I knew she was talking about the Hankow Convent, and schools, and—and how she was so much interested in charities, and about some children—Dearest, you are not ill again, are you?'

She had been on the point of saying Eurasian schools and Eurasian children, but remembering how the word had once affected him, had been careful to leave it out. But the need for doing this had made her quicker to see the change in her husband's face.

It had grown grey, and he looked very weary. But he said decidedly, 'No, it is nothing. I am only tired. That is why I came away from Mrs. FitzHugh's. But I'd rather you wouldn't see anything more of Mrs. G. J. Smith. She was only humbugging. I know her well enough to know she is not in the least interested in charities. And I admire Mrs. FitzHugh. That woman has a good heart.'

'But, Claude,' said Lilian gravely, 'you did not hear the way she spoke. And I think, too, there are some things people should never speak about.'

If he had been going to tell her anything, that stopped him.

He sat leaning back in his comfortable armchair, and meditated. It was the first time he had thought his wife's judgment on a moral question at fault, and yet he knew that it was he himself and his general tone of thought that had led Lilian to express this opinion. It was not inborn in her. But whilst he had been leading her on to hold such a view until at last she thus tersely formulated it, he himself had been

learning to think life would be far simpler were there a little more plain speaking. Yet how could he, a man, insist upon it if his innocent wife shrank from it? Yet the more he thought, the more he saw no other way out of the growing reserve between them; a reserve that was ever and again cutting him to the heart, and under which he feared Lilian was suffering yet more. He acknowledged his responsibility towards his children, and must continue to do so, even without Dr. Donaldson's refusal to relieve him altogether of it. Their mother had married a Macao Portuguese, now in Mr. G. J. Smith's employ. And he had decided to place the children at last in the Eurasian school, before there might be another family for them to be mixed up with. He had thought it right to take his children to the school himself, partly, perhaps, because it was so exquisitely painful to him to do so, partly because he felt he owed it to them to give them something of a father's care, while depriving them for ever of their mother's. The boy had shown such great delight at seeing him again that he had been greatly touched. The little girl had shown only regret at being parted from her mother. But he had discovered a curious likeness in her to his own aunt Claudia; her blue eyes were surely like Miss Gardiner's. Then, as he was coming away, greatly moved, he had met Mrs. G. J. Smith, and sought to pass her by. But she had been voluble in her explanations as to why she had come to see the home, voluble, yet, as he remembered, strangely confused. He remembered, also, that Mrs. FitzHugh, he had been told, was one of the most energetic members of the committee. Evidently now she knew all about it, and had valiantly thrown herself into the breach to prevent Lilian's hearing anything from silly, chattering Mrs. Smith.

Was it right that he should leave his wife liable at any moment to learn what must pain her so much from almost anyone? Ought he to force good-natured people, like Mrs. FitzHugh, to sacrifice themselves and make scenes? Had not poor Mrs. Smith herself on this occasion been somewhat victimised? Possibly she had even gone to see the children at their mother's request, for he believed she was very kind-hearted. She might not in the least suspect their connection with himself. Yet if she had even only mentioned meeting him at the school, what must Lilian have thought, seeing how united they were, and that he had never mentioned going there to her! In any case, evidently Mrs. FitzHugh knew, or



at least suspected, the truth. And Mrs. Robinson knew the truth, and hated Lilian ; that he knew. Very likely it was she really who had set Mrs. Smith on to talk to Lilian. It would be quite in character if she had. Dared he leave Lilian at Mrs. Robinson's mercy, to hear any day from her that he had already two children when he married her—to learn from her what he had never been able to explain to her himself, why he had not offered to her in England, why he had shrunk from her in the Niukan Gorge ? He felt now what an unutterable relief it would be to tell Lilian all, to speak freely with her of so many things that were like a sealed book between them now. He had such confidence in her love, he felt he could not lose that, whatever happened. Her love had at last given him a belief in the love of God for men. He believed in God's love for himself now, as he believed in Lilian's. But he did not feel that he could force his confidence upon her. And Lilian had said very earnestly—almost as if she had a hidden meaning in so saying—‘I think there are some things people should never speak about !’

She had said *speak*, not *do*. He had felt great anxiety about Lilian's health of late. If other people had noticed cause for uneasiness, how could it escape him, her husband, whose eyes hung upon her face, and watched her every movement ? Her mother had died when she was born. And he often recalled with pain Mrs. Stuckey's comparing Lilian at first sight to a hothouse flower. To himself she seemed hardly robust enough to become a mother, and yet for some months now he knew how Lilian had been looking forward with all her heart to God's trusting her with a little child to bring up for Him, as she expressed it. And to him, as to her, it seemed as if the highest moment of his life would be when Lilian could show him her child—his and hers. The paternal instincts that had been repressed by the simple grossness of his previous connection were yet strong in Claude Fortescue, as in so many men, and perhaps it was thanks to his training in Chinese philosophy that whilst he worked untiringly at his great book, he yet always regarded having children as the only perfect way of attaining immortality, transmitting by his own struggles and sufferings weakened tendencies towards vice, stronger aspirations after higher aims.

But as Claude Fortescue sat and thought, looking forward into the future, he could only see drearily a life with a greater and ever greater gulf between him and Lilian, more and more

subjects—sealed subjects—between them too. Susanna came in from school, but she also seemed unusually thoughtful, sitting with a lesson-book before her, yet hardly seeming to be reading it. So they all three pursued the separate current of their thoughts, till the evening passed on into the night, and one more day was gone.

‘It is difficult, but it is not impossible, I suppose,’ sighed Susanna, and got up and went to bed.

They did not know if she meant her lesson.

‘If you form in your heart a good intention, although you may not have done any good, the good spirits follow you,’ read Claude Fortescue, taking up a piece of paper she had left behind her. ‘Why, if there isn’t little Susanna studying the Taoist Book of Rewards and Punishments.’

‘She has often heard you say missionaries are so ignorant as to the religions they wish to convert the Chinese from. And Cousin Mary has always told her she hopes she’ll be a missionary. So Susanna has been full of studying Taoism, as that is what you are interested in. And I thought that was the easiest book for her.’

‘But, Lilian, is it good for her? Are we doing our duty by this child?’

For a moment their eyes met, and they were both painfully conscious of the gulf between them. Their eyes looked longingly across it into one another’s, then fell. The next minute Lilian had risen, and put her arms caressingly about her husband. ‘Claude, you seem so strangely serious to-night. I think Susanna is quite happy, and I am sure she is growing more and more good every day. But was I wrong to tell her of the Book of Rewards and Punishments? Of course I have never read it, at least not in Chinese. And Susanna intends to be a great Chinese scholar. But what have you been thinking of all the evening?’

‘Of you, my heart’s darling, my one and only love.’ Then in the embrace that followed they forgot everything for the moment but their love for one another. But as he held her face near him, looking down at it, Claude noticed with sorrow that Lilian’s face looked thinner than when he had last seen it, and surely there were dark rings round her eyes. But she laughingly told him the lampshade cast shadows, and that kneeling beside him made her feel faint now. So she got up, and she, too, went to bed.

He sat and looked at Susanna’s translations. ‘If a man

who has done wrong repents and converts himself, if he abstains from evil deeds, and accomplishes all sort of good works, he will at length obtain joy and felicity. This is called changing evil fortune for good.'

Then at last a smile stole over his wearied features.

'"It is difficult, but it is not impossible, I suppose." God bless you, Susanna!' he murmured.

But it is one thing to know what is right, quite another to be moved to do it. The whole Chinese race may be taken as the best living illustration of this. It presents the old truth in such a new, incongruous light to us. But we each daily illustrate it to ourselves.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### A CONFESSION OF FAITH

He had wed me, and girt me with worship; he had built me, to ban my  
least cares,  
Hanging gardens, where fountains of porphyry played splendid from  
flowery parterres.

But 'twas love, only love, that illumined his looks when they dwelt  
upon mine,  
As I called him my conqueror, my hero, my warrior, my chieftain  
divine,  
And we lifted our rose-wreathen goblets, we fed upon love's richest  
fruits,  
While from clustered acacias came floating the music of Palmyrene  
lutes.

Did I dream? Was the darkness dividing? Had he heeded the prayer  
I had prayed?

Then a voice. . . . It was his, yet so mournful! '*Amyitis! art thou  
not afraid?*'

'No! no! no!' I flashed forth . . .

And I cried, 'Whatso'er thine abasement, low down to it, Lord, let me  
bow!

Though the barrier between us be loathsome, still, love, I am I, thou art  
thou!

Night by night we met thus, till the bondage that fettered and foiled  
him had ceased,

Till he rose once more Nebuchadnezzar—he rose disenthralled and  
released.

EDGAR FAWCETT.

NEXT morning hardly had Mr. Fortescue gone to his office before  
Mrs. Stuckey appeared again. Lilian felt more than ever puzzled

what to make of her, for she seemed to have nothing to say, but she sat and spent the morning with her without any apology. Only, whenever she tried to talk to her, Mrs. Stuckey said, 'Oh, don't mind me,' and took up a book and seemed to read. But Lilian soon felt her great eyes wander back to her face. 'I am studying the outlines of your head and throat,' she said once, by way of explanation. She stayed to luncheon as a matter of course, and even then did not offer to go away. When asked about Mr. Stuckey, she said, with a toss of the head, 'Oh, *he* knows where I am'; then added, as an afterthought, 'He is working up some statistics. No one has the least idea what a head Mr. Stuckey has for figures. He does not tabulate, he condenses.' But she did not seem inclined to pursue the subject, and Lilian, always having her doubts about Mr. Stuckey's wonderful abilities, did not pursue it either. So they sat in silence after Claude Fortescue had once more gone back to his office.

Lilian's doctor came to see her. And Mrs. Stuckey did not offer to leave the room even then. So Lilian took him away upstairs for a hurried few minutes.

But he came back to the drawing-room for his hat and stick, and then he took the opportunity of saying to Mrs. Stuckey, 'I understand you are a great friend of Mrs. Fortescue's. Can't you get her to tell you what she has on her mind? There is something that is wearing her quite away. I have never come across a case of such nervous repression. She has tremendous self-command. But it would be far better if she could break down and have a good cry.'

'I know it,' said Mrs. Stuckey in her quick American way.

'And every day it is put off it becomes more dangerous,' said the doctor, rather put out by her assumption of knowledge.

'She might have an attack of hysterics,' began Mrs. Stuckey musingly.

'Not she,' said the doctor. 'But even that would be better. She is wearing out her whole strength as it is. Get her to speak to you freely, if you can.'

'To me! I'm nobody,' said Mrs. Stuckey. 'Her husband is all the world. It is to him she must speak. That's just what I'm here for.'

The doctor went away, thinking, like many people, that Mrs. Stuckey was an eccentricity. 'But, after all, any woman is better than none. The poor girl has got no mother,' he

thought to himself, then put his head back into the room to say, 'I shall be at home from five to six. After that probably at——' and he scribbled an address. 'I'm dining at the Ashleys', if I get there.'

Mrs. Stuckey looked at the piece of paper, then opened her bag, 'I've got bromide, smelling salts, vinegar, you see.' Her bag was full of bottles.

'Oh, you'll do,' said the doctor. 'Enough to invigorate an army.' And he went away laughing. 'The woman is mad,' he thought, 'but there is a method in her madness.'

When Claude Fortescue came in, to his surprise he found Mrs. Stuckey still there, and Lilian looking sadly tired. So, to relieve her, he at once set to work energetically to entertain Mrs. Stuckey, and take her off Lilian's hands. And being himself full of it, he showed the little artist the last manuscript sheet of his *magnum opus*, as he always lovingly called it—so far he had only published papers, though some of his Consular Reports were said to be the best reading extant upon China, though, like Baber's immortal 'Travels in Western China,' alas! buried in a blue cover. And he began to explain to her the composition of a Chinese character that had great interest for him, as bearing upon some Taoist mystery.

'What first attracted you to Taoism?' asked Mrs. Stuckey abruptly.

'I imagine in the first instance it was rather the paradoxical character of the sayings of Chuangtse, the spiritual Lao-tse's most philosophical follower. All Chinese literature teems with allusions to the sayings of this greatest metaphysician that China has ever produced.'

'And then?' asked Mrs. Stuckey. She seemed really interested. It is not every day that a man who is studying Taoism gets an interested listener.

'What rivets my attention to it now is the light it casts upon the essential nature of religion, all religion, and its fate on earth. Lao-tse is the first of the great teachers whose writings have come down to us. No one ever aimed at purer abstractions; his teaching seems to have been a forecast of the highest Gospel truths. The world has a first cause, which first cause was the mother of all men—as we say, their father. If a man has once found his mother, he recognises thereby that he is her child. When he does this, and returns to his mother, then the passing away of his body has no terror for him. He who knows the Eternal is Tao's, and therefore eternal too. He

who lives for outward things, puts all his pleasure in them, and follows after them, he at the end of this life is not to be saved—dies the death, as we say. Tao helps all men, is the protecting sanctuary for all to flee to; and just as He is the most precious treasure of the good—a pearl above price—so He never abandons those who are not good. He is their helping Saviour, since He allows them also to find Him, if they will but seek after Him, and forgives them their sins. Therefore is He in all the world the most precious. What other religion besides Christianity admits the possibility of God being a God of the unrighteous as well as the godly? Is it not a revelation of the Saviour? And five centuries before Christ, remember. Lao-tsze was born 601 B.C. And there is no doubt about his writing the Tao Teh King. Before Buddha and before Confucius! Even Chuangtze, who was so far below Lao-tsze spiritually, though he may have been above him intellectually, says, “I will have heaven and earth for my sarcophagus; the sun and moon shall be the insignia when I lie in state, and all creation shall be the mourners at my funeral;” and when people remonstrated, saying the birds of the air would devour his corpse, he replied, “What matters it?”

His face shone as he quoted the sayings, that had been indeed a revelation of Divine Truth to him. And Mrs. Stuckey understood what Susanna meant by saying she thought him at times inspired. She crossed her little feet, leaning back in her chair, only showing her sympathy by her expressive eyes, that she might not interrupt him.

‘The misfortune was that Lao-tsze was too far ahead of the men of his time. And therefore almost at once his teachings, which, I take it, were a reformation, a new testament, rather than an original revelation, became overlaid with every possible corruption—ranked materialism mixed with magical acts. “Thus in this vile world below, Noblest things have vilest using.” Taoism—which says directly a man says, “I know Tao,” he destroys Tao, because Tao must be unknowable, incomprehensible—Taoism shows more than anything the grossness of that human mind through which we attempt to reflect to ourselves the Divine essence, and explains why, ever and again, a man, nobler than his fellows, looking round at the travesty of God held up to him by men, refuses to bow the knee before such an idol, till at last, confused, he denies even the existence of God, or rests acquiescent in doubt.

“*Om Mani padme hum*”—“The jewel is in the lotus,” which, as I understand, signifies, “God is in us and about us, and in Him we live, and move, and have our being,” God alone being life—this, which, like the poor Thibetan, I understand to be the great cardinal truth of all religion, the great first principle, without which no religion could exist, has been so overlaid with rites and ceremonies, appealing to man’s senses, that in all forms of religion handed down to us people attribute more value to some ordinance, perhaps for the time expedient, than to walking with God, absorption in His will. The Thibetan climbs on his roof nightly, and lights a fire at sundown. He flings out his praying-banners, that the four winds may blow the six sacred syllables to and fro, and at each breath bring down a blessing upon the whole country-side. Then the villagers, men and women alike, give themselves up to drunkenness and debauchery. The boy Buddhist priest, with his shaven head and six stigmata, prostrates himself before each shrine in his temple, reverently lighting a joss-stick before each in turn, and having thus done, he expects the exacting but easily appeased Deity to be satisfied. We think we can afford to look down upon their superstitions, that are not ours, as we call their images idols, and catalogue the sins that they commit, and which are really as much contrary to their religion as to ours. But are we so much better with our Sunday observance, that, instead of helping us to remember God on all our days, shunts Him off, as it were, on to the one day, and then does not even give Him that?’

Mrs. Stuckey nodded very expressively here. Otherwise her luminous eyes simply hung upon his lips, apparently drinking in every word he said. But she made no further sign of agreement or disagreement, only shifted her position a little, and seemed to ask for more.

Claude Fortescue looked at his wife. He saw that she was resting, really resting now. She wore an expression of deep thankfulness, almost as if she were really in that presence of God of which he had been only speaking.

‘Clergymen exhort people to go to church, to receive the Sacrament, without knowing whether their hearts may not be full of all uncleanness, disqualifying them for anything but an outward part in such holy rites. And then, as a nation, we send out our young men alone, away from the counsel and examples of relations and friends, to fight amongst people of other faith, other forms, other temperaments, against what

we call the world, the flesh, and the devil. Dr. Donne points out that "God doth not say it is not good for this or that particular man to be alone, but is not good in the general, for the whole frame of the world, that man should be alone." The Chinese attach great importance to this. They guard their young men almost more than we guard our girls, as they inculcate the duty of keeping to Tao, or *the Way*, in opposition to what they call crooked paths. In the words of your favourite poet, Lilian :

Wholly abstain or wed. The bounteous Lord  
Allows thee choice of paths; take no by-ways.

I think Watters cites this as an illustration of the meaning of Tao.'

There was something specially pathetic in Claude Fortescue's appealing look at his wife as he quoted these lines. But Lilian was tired out; her mind was still dwelling on the quotation from Dr. Donne, which was new to her, and which seemed to her quite outside her husband's usual course of reading. She was still thinking it out, divining with a woman's power of divination that it was for her that it had been noted and remembered, and wondering with what especial object.

Mrs. Stuckey noticed the husband's appeal, the want of response from the wife; her heart was touched, and for a moment her eyes dropped.

Mr. Fortescue's discourse wandered somewhat. 'One of the greatest blessings, for which we cannot, I think, be sufficiently thankful, is the early spread of Mahometanism. But for that, Asia, and Africa even, might both have become nominally Christian at a period when it was impossible for them to receive Christian truths. And but for Mahomet, we might have a Christianity so overlaid with error that it would be impossible for any but scholars to discern the underlying beauty. As it is, when I enter a Roman Catholic church, with its ghastly crucifixes and bleeding hearts laid bare, I always echo Lowell's words :

"Lo here!" said He,  
'The images ye have made of Me!'

'You are putting a false meaning on to that passage,' said Mrs. Stuckey, who knew her Lowell well.

'Yes, I know I am. But you remember the whole poem, which renders fully the idea that overwhelms me whenever I



dare to enter one of those truly desecrated sanctuaries,' said Claude Fortescue, the veins in his forehead swelling, as he spoke now with force. 'To me a Buddhist temple, with its peaceful courtyards and shadowing groves of trees, is comparatively pure, even in its dustiness—which last, too, tells that it is but a survival of the past, a survival that has lost its meaning now, only once had one. We may be ripening for a new revelation, though till we have left off disputing about the authority of Jesus, to concentrate all our attention upon His teaching, and have at least attempted a society founded on its lines, I do not see that we can expect it. But of one thing I am certain: "pure religion and undefiled" we shall never find established in this world. That would make it heaven.'

'Pure!' murmured Mrs. Stuckey. 'Pure! I never understand what people mean when they talk of purity. What do you mean when you use the word?'

Lilian looked round surprised.

It was only the second time she had interrupted him by a question, and this seemed a strange one to Lilian. Mrs. Stuckey was no longer gazing at Mr. Fortescue, drinking in his words—one might almost have said drawing them forth. She was now playing with her watch-chain, arranging her dress, apparently diverting her attention in all manner of little ways. But she had asked the question, and after a moment or two's pause Claude Fortescue attempted to answer it.

'I fancy we have made the meaning of the word difficult to ourselves by generally regarding it rather as an abstaining from evil than as in itself a positive virtue. We all know what the Judas kiss was. Do we always realise how the Judas kiss goes on through all the ages, betraying what it professes to love? Is not purity the sincerity of the affections, as truth is of the intellect, both of which, if for once, must be for ever? That says nothing as to how we subdivide our affections, any more than into how many divisions we break up truth for purposes of expression. I have never myself been able to see any impurity in plurality of wives. We are in a stage of development that has passed beyond it, that is all. When one reads the life of a man like Moltke, one feels at once the impossibility, not to say the undesirability, of a man like that having more than one wife. It would be a sin against nature. And I fancy for most of us now it is. But had not some of the old patriarchs as great a purity of thought as any of us?'

Though I notice, even among them, trouble seems always to have arisen from the introduction of the concubine; as so often in China we see it now. Possibly it is always there, if we knew more of their inner life.'

'I never noticed that in the Old Testament,' said Lilian softly.

Mrs. Stuckey seemed somehow to have effaced herself. And the husband and wife felt as if they were alone together.

'If you look through the Old Testament carefully, I think you will always find it so,' said Claude Fortescue, speaking very tenderly as to Lilian now. 'It was not revealed to them then that there was any wrongdoing in such a state of things, I suppose because for that period of the world's history it was probably a lesser wrong than leaving too large a body of women and children without the protection of some man of power. The Chinese system appears to be a survival, like so many things in China, from the old patriarchal days. It has lasted its time probably, and is dying out by degrees. God grant it may do so without making place for the so much wider spread vice of Europe!'

'Amen!' said Mrs. Stuckey. 'I think Mrs. Fortescue looks pale. Will you see to her? I hear Susanna.'

And the next moment everyone could hear Susanna, and Mrs. Stuckey's welcome of her. Mrs. Stuckey, who had never been known to notice her before, seemed to have volumes to say to Susanna now. Mrs. Stuckey, who had sat so quiet, almost log-like, only listening to what was said to her, seemed all on a sudden boiling over with vitality and volubility, as she not only prevented Susanna from entering the room, but carried her off at once upstairs on some private business of her own. They heard her talk and laughter, dying away as she went upstairs, but they did not heed them, for they were alone together. And when Claude bent over Lilian to see if she were really so pale, he found that she was silently crying, and when he tried to kiss those tears away and comfort her, Lilian gently twined her arms round him, and looked into his face; and in that pure loving gaze something moved him. And he told her all.

So few words seemed needful in the end. And all through she seemed to understand so quickly, as if to spare him the pain of telling. And all she said was, as she took his hand in both hers, 'And whatever is right we must help each other to do now.' But the next moment she stood up, and as she did so she tottered and fell fainting.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

## AT SEA AGAIN

Experience! Nonsense! What a man has done once, that he'll do again—with a difference.—MONCKTON MILNES.

It never occurred to Claude Fortescue to wonder, not even in the after years, that when he rang the bell Mrs. Stuckey and Susanna at once appeared with everything that was needful; nor how the doctor was there before he himself had even realised he should be sent for.

Everything was blotted out for him by the one overwhelming anxiety that rendered him useless as a nurse. Yet he would not leave Lilian's side, nor could they think of his doing so, for if he did but stir, her hand moved restlessly, seeking his, her poor dazed eyes asked where he was. Mrs. Stuckey, however, at once settled to stay the night, and Susanna once more shone as a nurse.

'That young woman is invaluable,' said the doctor. 'As far as I am concerned, I should like to have the world peopled with just such.'

'We also have our uses,' whispered the irrepressible Mrs. Stuckey, who had left the patient for a few minutes to interview her husband.

'She will live,' said the doctor, assuming the theatrical pose and expression that was the great weakness of one of the kindest men that ever lived.

'And Fortescue?' asked Mr. Stuckey.

'He is with her,' said Mrs. Stuckey indifferently. 'There'll be no baby?'

'There'll be no baby,' said the doctor, again theatrically. 'There never can be now.'

'And Fortescue?' asked Mr. Stuckey.

'He is doing what he can,' said the doctor good-naturedly. 'She will require the greatest care,' said he to Mrs. Stuckey. 'There must be no exciting influences——'

'And Fortescue?' repeated Mr. Stuckey for the third time.

'Bless the man! Fortescue has not had a baby. What does he mean with his "And Fortescues"?' asked the doctor angrily of Mrs. Stuckey.

She looked at him.

'My dear, I am a husband myself, though you may have forgotten it for the moment. I can fancy how Fortescue is feeling. And he is with her. And you say there must be no exciting influences. You must have him down, and explain

to him clearly—clearly, mind—that she will live, that he has not killed her.’

‘I never thought of that,’ said the doctor ; whilst Mr. Stuckey’s expression seemed to say, ‘I never overlook little details like that.’ But all he said was, ‘Better leave him to my wife. But be very explicit, my dear. Recollect, he’ll be dazed. You mustn’t mince matters.’

So Claude Fortescue was summarily fetched away. ‘I have killed her—I have killed my wife,’ he was repeating to himself, as he came slowly down the stairs.

‘No, you have *not*,’ said Mrs. Stuckey, taking both his hands in hers to try to arrest his attention. ‘Don’t flatter yourself that everything that is done is just done by you.’

He looked down at the little woman. And the despair of that glance made both the men turn away.

‘She will need care—*great* care,’ said Mrs. Stuckey. ‘But she will live. The doctor says that she will *live*. Do you hear?’

Claude Fortescue looked up, and the doctor just wheeled round and said once more dramatically, ‘She will *live*!’

Claude Fortescue still seemed hardly to understand, as he looked back once more at Mrs. Stuckey, who was still holding his hands. ‘She was born delicate. And she was not made for China—this great brutal climate. I always told you she was a hothouse flower. But she will *live*,’ repeated Mrs. Stuckey. ‘Now, Stuckey, do you see after him. And when he is quite, quite calm, let him come back to her. She’ll be missing him all the while, remember,’ and she ran away upstairs.

‘Sit down, Fortescue,’ said Mr. Stuckey.

And Mr. Fortescue sat down quite passively.

‘Remember you must not thwart her,’ said the doctor.

Thwart her ! He thwart his wife ! The idea was startling to him.

‘Let her work ! Let her be useful ! Do not ask her to sit and dream of the child she will never have now. Only geniuses should be set to sit and dream, and they are probably the worse for it. Do, for goodness sake, let your wife help other people, and she will do.’

Then the doctor went away, and in Mr. Stuckey’s silent but comfortable companionship Claude Fortescue became quite calm.

‘We all have to consider our wives’ characters a little,’ said Mr. Stuckey with a curious expression. ‘It is very odd that it should be so, of course ; but I believe it is a fact.’

Then Claude Fortescue smiled. And after that he was quite fit to go back to his wife's bedside. The child they had dreamt of for so many months, the little angel-child Lilian had so longed for, it seemed that God was keeping to Himself, after all. He thought he knew what the disappointment would be to her. His own life all on a sudden looked cold and lonely by comparison with what he had pictured. But if only Lilian would live !

And she did live—came back to life much more quickly than they any of them anticipated ; and just as when she became unconscious, so her first thought on recovering consciousness was for her husband, putting out her own hand to feel for his, and clasping his with her thin fingers, but with a firm fond touch that said more than words.

'I am so glad I am to live, for your sake, dearest,' were the first words she spoke.

'And for your own ?' he asked, with eyes full of tears.

'Dear husband, what a question ! Are we not too much one to have a divided life ? I am glad to be with you, as you are to have me still.'

But she never spoke of the baby that was to have been. And he dared not, she was still so weak.

Then, like a dream, their Shanghai life of expectation seemed to pass away from them. For Claude Fortescue got orders to replace some other great Chinese scholar and proceed at once to join the Legation at Peking. 'If only Fortescue's Chinese knowledge would be made any use of !' men said bitterly.

Everything had to be done for Lilian, and was done for her with kindly cordiality. Other hands packed away the baby-linen, and the little caps that she had worked. Other mothers shed tears over them, as they folded them all away with camphor and silver paper, not knowing what she would like to do with them, and not daring yet to ask her. When all the furniture was put up for auction, and everything that could remind her of her Shanghai life was packed away in tin-lined cases, then Lilian was carried from the hospitable friend's house in which they had been staying for the last few days, on to the northward-bound steamer, and she found herself once more afloat, among the nasty little chopping waves of the yellow China Sea.

How many things seemed to have happened since last she felt the salt breeze on her face ! It seemed to her now all her life. But she held her husband's hands in hers, and she

felt thankful. And as he saw the sea breeze bringing back the colour into her pale cheeks, he too felt thankful.

'It is very difficult, but it is not impossible, I suppose,' said he, thinking aloud.

'What is it, Claude?'

'Oh, Tao, I suppose,' said he, equivocating—'the Way, the Truth, and the Life. It certainly is a most difficult word to render,' but he was thinking of what she was thinking of. And yet he dared not speak frankly to her, not even yet. Thus already was a fresh wall of separation being built up between them.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### EXPIATION

What would we not give, you and I,  
The early sweet of life to buy!

Alas! sweetheart, that cannot we;

Life lapses by.—JOHN PAYNE.

GLORIOUS hills all round, about whose summits the swifts circle in summer with whirring wings; islands and rugged cliffs against which the whole force of the Pacific Ocean dashes in winter; a coastline of great variety and extreme beauty; a stretch of sand that invites to bathing, and a blue sea, and bay sparkling in the sunshine, somewhat recalling the Bay of Naples. That is Chefoo from the outside, as you arrive in the steamer. But alas! that it has no background, is but a coastline, nothing more, like the cat little Alice saw in Wonderland, that vanished, till nothing was left of it but its grin—or rather, with the whole world of China for its background, a waste of roadlessness, treeless, manured and cultivated. But people must have lived in China to know what *manured* means, to know what a pleasure resort is like without pleasure, a sea-bath without bathing machines or bathing men, without donkeys, or nigger minstrels, or curious crystals on sale; a sea-bath that only differs from any other place in that you can bathe in the sea there if you like, and swim, if you can, to Corea or Japan, or across to America, if your strength carries you—nothing hindering you; nothing, either, helping you. Looked at from the outside, Chefoo is enchanting on a bright sunny morning. And as Mr. Mortimer came off to the steamer in a white-awned boat, the consular flag flying overhead, and himself in a new summer suit, the very picture of health and strength, Lilian

sat up in her long chair for the first time, and held out her hand, brightly smiling.

Only the officer on duty had seen him stop short and half turn away as he first caught sight of her. 'What we bring the girls we say we love to!' he muttered, then went forward to greet her.

He had met Claude Fortescue already, escorting Susanna to the one great school of China, where she was to spend the summer among healthy sea breezes, whilst the Fortescues went on to Peking. 'And I don't think he does your care as much credit as he did mine,' said Mr. Mortimer. 'Mind you don't let them keep him sweltering in Peking. He can correct despatches just as well in a temple on the Western Hills. You've got to look after him, you know.'

'Oh, if he dies, I should die too! And I am getting well as fast as I can,' was her apparently rather inconsequential reply.

But Mr. Mortimer quite understood her. And the loving light in her eyes all on a sudden made him forgive Fortescue for having married her, though it gave him a little shock too. There is a sense of surprise, not altogether pleasurable, in finding that the girl you have thought ideal is altogether satisfied, even with your best man friend. But it made him forgive Fortescue. And at the same time he seemed to know intuitively that Lilian's chair was not placed exactly as she would like it, and he arranged her so that she could see the Bluff, and the waves breaking against it, and yet not be inconvenienced by the sunshine; moving her chair so carefully, and arranging her cushions and shawls so ably, as at once to excite her surprise.

'Well, you see, I've five sisters, all married. And I'm not always out in China. Do I like this place better than Ichang? Rather! Capital shooting; splendid bathing; boating; riding. And now the season coming on, as I hear. All the Shanghai ladies expected soon. Oh, it will be grand. Then I've got such a house, too! I wish you could see my house. It is a sort of palace, with the most beautiful hanging garden, and such a view! I've planted every flower you can think of in my garden. If one doesn't come up, the other will, I suppose. If they all come up at once, it will be what the Chinese call *reh law*, jolly crowded. We had no end of a jamboree on at the Club the other night,' and then in the fashion of out-ports he began to dilate upon their last concert and dance, as if there never had been such an entertainment. It was evidently the engrossing topic of the day.

Then after a while Claude Fortescue returned with Susanna to say good-bye to Lilian, and tell her what she herself thought of her school.

'A fine-grown young woman, Miss Betterton!' said Mr. Mortimer. 'School hardly seems the right place for her. Can I take her back, though? The consular barge is very much at her service, and I suppose I can do that much, though Sundays out, I'm afraid, are beyond a bachelor Consul. But I'll see the ladies look after her.'

Then Susanna, having been quite long enough in China to snatch at the opportunity of the consular barge, pulled by four stout rowers, in preference to a sampan corkscrewingly propelled, the two were sent off together, Mr. Mortimer putting on all his consular dignity for the occasion, for Susanna certainly did not look thirteen, and the child, who had never shed a tear on parting from her mother, was now sobbing bitterly at being separated from her Cousin Lilian.

'Oh, Mr. Mortimer, you—you don't think she'll die, Cousin Lilian? You think she'll—she'll get well?' she sobbed out at last, evidently settling herself to dry her tears now.

'You seem to see the sun through them both a little, but, bless you, child, they're both quite happy. She has got her husband, and that's all she cares about; and he has got her. And they're all right.'

'I think Cousin Lilian wanted a baby too,' said Susanna earnestly. 'I don't know why, I'm sure. I should think Cousin Claude was quite enough if I were his wife, shouldn't you?'

'I really don't know, Miss Betterton, not having tried being anyone's wife yet. How is your mama? Has she converted a great many Chinese yet?'

Then to his surprise, and altogether beyond his wishes, Susanna began to give him with most painstaking accuracy all the details as to the mission success and failures, till, as he declared afterwards, he nearly screamed with laughter. But at the time he only felt very much ashamed of himself, for he had asked out of idleness, and Susanna was so very much in earnest about this man, who, it was so sad, had taken to opium again, and that one, who was such a wealthy rice merchant, and had lost all his customers since he had become a Christian, and was still so staunch and never complained, though reduced to poverty. 'He bears it all for Christ's sake,' said Susanna, 'just as I mean to bear my school. No one can think that's very pleasant for me after enjoying Cousin Claude's conversation for months. I think



Mr. Fortescue the most superior man I have ever known, don't you ?'

'Ye-es, I suppose he is,' said Mr. Mortimer.

'And yet I don't think Confucius would quite have approved of him,' said Susanna. 'It is curious, isn't it? For Confucius always thought everything of the superior man. Do you think it is that Taoism? Taoism seems never to have answered.'

But Mr. Mortimer had not an opinion on the subject of Taoism, he said, so couldn't oblige her with one.

And meanwhile the steamer's pulses were throbbing, and the little steamer itself was making its way round the great sea-washed headlands, rolling a good deal, because it was necessarily flat-bottomed to get over the Taku Bar and up the winding Peiho, where steamers seem to tie knots in themselves, and meet their own bows or sterns, as the case may be, so incessant and so sharp are the Peiho's bends. They—the Fortescues—arrived at that cheery-looking Tientsin, that Gordon laid out, and that has for some time past seemed the most thriving port in China; and fitting up a Chinese house-boat, proceeded with all their belongings for five days farther up the Peiho River, till they reached Tung Chow, only thirteen miles from Peking. But what a thirteen miles those are! Over what was once a road paved with monumental blocks of stone, sometimes four feet long, and broad and deep in proportion, but now sometimes stood on end, cornerwise, or with their places knowing them no more; springless carts; trains of camels coming for, and carrying back, brick tea into Mongolia and Siberia; donkeys, ponies, men, women, and children, stumble, strain, groan, and swear along that road, through the blinding dusts or the still viler smelling mud, year in year out, to and fro between the rest of the world and the imperial city, to which every mandarin of rank in all China is obliged to resort on receiving office. It is a scene inconceivable, and in itself explains the condition of decay of the rest of the great empire, but is itself inexplicable, unless regarded as Peking's one great thirteen-mile-long rampart against the incursions of barbarians, as all non-Chinese are there considered. The city gates are closed at sundown, as is generally the case in China, and at whatever hour you leave Tung Chow there is always a sense of hurry to arrive before the gates are closed. Those thirteen miles, taken anyhow, are a hard day's work, as in a serried crowd of vehicles each traveller fights his way along, generally choked

and blinded all the way. Then comes one of the moments of a lifetime, recalling the first sight of St. Peter's at Rome, of the low white cliffs of England to those English-speaking people—so many now—born out of England, when the wonderful walls of Peking, far surpassing for stateliness and difficulty of construction the so much talked-of Great Wall of China, suddenly burst upon the view with their curious, somewhat mock, but still impressive, gate towers. And then after the fierce *mêlée* at the gate, when cartwheel gets locked in cartwheel, and oaths thicken, there comes a sense of bewilderment as the traveller finds himself, not in a city apparently, but in a sort of dusty wilderness, besprinkled with shanties, and asks in phrase-book Chinese, carefully crammed for the occasion, 'Am I inside the city or outside the city?' then breathes relieved on being told what he could never have felt sure of for himself, and realises that the city gates are behind him, and there is no longer any need for anxious haste.

Yet there is also a slight sense of depressed wonderment: 'Is this what I have come out into the wilderness to see?' For at first sight nothing can look less worth seeing than Peking. It is only gradually the mind of the astonished Westerner becomes capable of perceiving its grand plan, its magnificent perspectives, till at last he realises that even in Paris there is nothing like this Mantchu conception, as seen from the Central Drum Tower *par excellence*. But he feels the enchantment of Peking directly that, making an expedition on purpose to see them, he discerns from afar the exquisite yellow-tiled pavilions of the imperial palace, within the fourfold inclosure of the Forbidden City, glittering in the sunshine, and wonders with a wonder never yet satisfied, 'Are there fairy-like treasures of art within, worthy of those truly fairy-tale-like pavilions?' But no European has ever yet gone within to see, and no Chinese has ever told. Only the report comes out—true or not—that three thousand eunuchs live within the Forbidden City's walls.

But all these things, together with the filth and horror indescribable of the one great city of the world that makes no provision whatever for decency, and which are only intensified to the foreigner by the insult and derision with which his every movement is greeted in Peking, that since the Franco-Chinese War and its abortive conclusion altogether despises as it dislikes him—all these things pass from memory, as from sight, as the stranger enters under the great portals

of the British Legation. There a lawn-tennis ground smiles, mown and swept, with, scattered round it, the pleasant villa residences of the various secretaries, whilst to the right the great golden, vermillion, blue, and green pavilion, together with an exquisite perspective of entrance-halls and colonnades, leads to the palace of ample courtyards now set aside for many years to the British Legation, being from of old the place where the Chinese Empire used to entertain tributary kings. As the servants in the stately entrance-hall step forward to brush the dust from his feet, the visitor feels at once that he has entered within a charmed atmosphere, redolent with acts of kindness and delicate courtesies, but in which the whole great Empire of China drops out of view, together with the struggles and vicissitudes of the, at one time, merchant princes of England. English merchants have been smothered and bothered out of Asia Minor. And whilst they are being smothered and bothered out of China, none is permitted to pollute by his plebeian presence the pure aristocratic air of Peking, where in winter the representatives of the Diplomatic Corps are almost cut off even from postal communication with their nationals, and from which they themselves retire in summer to sanctuaries upon the Western Hills.

Lawn tennis, and the temples the various legations had secured for their approaching summer flight from the city of dirt, dust, and disdain ; this one's beauty, that one's dress ; together with scraps of gossip hot-pressed from Europe ; some dancing and more riding, seemed to keep all fully occupied. In spite of the champagne-like air, the representatives of the various nations of the world hardly ever went out into the great mass of surrounding filth and stench that probably only the disinfecting, all-pervading dust saves from breeding a pestilence. For why should the members of a legation risk being insulted ? And have they not their tennis courts and garden parties ? At Peking everyone, of course, collects ; but even for that no necessity to stir outside. Is there not an exhibition spread every morning for inspection in their pagodaed entrance-halls ? No need ever to go beyond the charmed precincts, unless to take the one Peking walk, along the top of those great masses of masonry, the walls. There are difficulties about that even, for there are briars besetting all the way, and besides, first the soldiers on guard, or some old woman to whom they have delegated their charge, have to be bribed, and when Peking is displeased with one or other of the legations, will not suffer anyone to go up. At other times

foreigners saunter along them, see from a distance the Altar of Heaven, where worship is still carried on in accordance with the oldest rite still in existence in continuity anywhere in the world, at the spring and autumn equinoxes ; note how it is only in their cities, where Westerns destroy them, that Chinese suffer trees to grow, each house having its tree in Peking ; or, if so disposed, wander on to gaze upon the two planispheres, the astrolabe, supported on exquisitely twisted dragons, with Chinese realism, heavily chained, although of bronze, the gigantic globe of the heavens, sundial, quadrant, sextant, and azimuth, all for hundreds of years in the open-air observatory on the walls, commanding a fine view of the heavens above, as also of the great examination halls below and the country round, not to speak of the imperial granaries built to sustain Peking in time of siege, though now reputed grainless.

But though the walls are the one walk of Peking—and they even have their drawbacks—yet Peking is full of interest for those who have eyes to see it, and can overcome, at least so far, their natural disgust at things unseen elsewhere. There through the dust shine out shop-fronts that are miracles of gilding, and within the innermost of their inner rooms are treasures of jade and Indian ink (falsely so called). That is in the Chinese city. Then there are the Confucian temples, like classic poems in their severely simple dignity. And in the streets all about are the queer carts in which the highest dignitaries of the empire may be seen hurrying to 4 A.M. conferences in the palace. Then there are the long mediæval funeral processions of red- and blue-button mandarins ; and sometimes well-grown, rosy-faced Mantchu women, with feet of the natural size, balancing themselves upon their extraordinary, but not for Peking too, high clogs, almost over-balanced by their projecting coiffures. There also may be seen Thibetan lamas, with golden gowns and villanous countenances. And by those who have the courage to risk a cudgelling, or worse, there are lamaseras to be visited, with even, in one of them, a real living Buddha. There are besides manuscripts in Peking, and books such as nowhere else. And, naturally, it is a breeding-ground of Sinologues.

Lilian had already met Sinologues in Shanghai, men who doubted about 'characters,' were severely critical of 'tones,' and who could never by any possibility render the simplest English phrase into current Chinese, or *vice versa*. But she felt now as if she had never really known the meaning of the term, as she found herself among a nucleus of Chinese

scholars, who all alike thought that he alone had divined the real genius of the great Chinese language. And after one had come to dinner with his dress coat airily adjusted over a flannel shirt; and another had addressed his left shoulder the whole evening, looking always as if he saw something he wanted to brush away on it, yet never did; and after each had differed from Mr. Fortescue and from one another on every subject Chinese, yet without ever either affirming anything, committing himself to any theory, or even being definite about a 'tone,' she turned to her husband, when they were left alone, and laughed one of her old merry laughs again. Thus even a Sinologue has uses.

Peking had been prepared to be delighted with the Fortescues, and to make much of them; but after the first, Peking decided they had been spoilt by Shanghai. Mr. Fortescue did not take the Chinese sufficiently as a mystery, a great question to be discussed but never solved. He seemed to regard them as human beings, who, if disposed, might find our usages from their point of view just as funny and contradictory as we are in the habit of finding theirs.

'Fancy what a Chinese mandarin's explanation of our Sacraments would be!' he was guilty of saying one day to some one who was describing one of their rites in the fashionable low-comedy style. And thereby he shocked the missionary element.

'The only way with Chinese is for us to do what we want to do, and let them acquiesce in what we have done afterwards,' he said on another occasion. 'No Chinese mandarin is sufficiently powerful to dare give us leave beforehand. Not even the Tsungli Yamen dares do that!' 'Evidently taking that distressing mercantile view about "putting our foot down," and that sort of thing. We might as well revert to the old gunboat policy,' was the diplomatic comment. Evidently Claude Fortescue had mixed too much with the merchants of Shanghai, and become more bourgeois than diplomatic. Were they not all placed there, safe away, quite by themselves at Peking, to see that their troublesome nationals did not in any way take advantage of the Chinaman, and embroil their respective nations with that unknown, and possibly therefore powerful, quantity, the Chinese army of the future?

As to Mrs. Fortescue, she was very sweet. She was lovely, certainly. But a wreck, a wreck! Peking had other women to show almost as fair—and better dressed—with more *tournure*, more *esprit*!

Then they all went out to the hills, to their temples. And the Fortescues, being too late to secure rooms in a temple, stayed with first one, then another. And then gradually they were all vanquished.

‘But she watches her husband too much. She just lives in her husband,’ said a laughing Frenchwoman. ‘It is not like real life, but like a *scène de théâtre* at the Vaudeville, or a farce.’

‘A very pretty farce, then,’ said the English Minister’s wife softly, with sympathetic tears in her eyes. ‘But, my dear madame, do send away your baby, pray. I think she may come in at any moment. And she must not see your baby.’

‘Not see my baby!’ cried the Frenchwoman, swelling with a mother’s offended pride. Then suddenly recollecting, ‘Oh, no! She must not see my beautiful—beautiful child. No wonder she hangs upon her husband, the poor—poor—poor thing!’

But she kissed her baby once too often, and there was Lilian standing in the doorway. It had never struck her that they none of them let her see their children, always told her they were out or fast asleep. But it had been an understood convention from the first among the ladies of Peking that they should none of them show their babies to the sad-eyed, childless mother, who still seemed to hold on to life as by a shred. It was unsealed, unratified, but hitherto had been as strictly observed as any international treaty. But now there was the vivacious French baby in full view, with its mother blushing like a guilty thing behind it. Lilian stood still for a moment in the doorway. Then she came forward, forgetting everything but the baby. ‘Baby! baby!’ she said softly, twined the little thing’s fingers round her own, and gazed into its upturned face, till she could not choose but hide her own in the soft baby cheek. Then she sat and nursed it, and talked to it; while the other women stood withdrawn, and watched, neither daring to interrupt her. Only the mother’s throat swelled with pride, as she took it all as a special compliment to her baby, the baby of all babies in the world! It was a great, bouncing French baby, with big, black, vivacious eyes, and French airs and graces even in its cradle. But to Lilian, as she sat and nursed it, the first baby she had seen since *then*, it was her baby, the baby that might have been, and might even have supplanted her husband in her affections. He came in, her husband, and found her nursing the baby, and the two other women looking on guiltily from the shadow

of the window. Only then did Lilian give the baby up to its mother, throwing her arms round her, and kissing her, as she did so. Then only she turned away with a little sob to her husband. The two other women had gone at once, carrying off the baby, and leaving them alone together.

His voice trembled as he folded his arms round her. 'My own darling! My heart's heart!'

'Claude,' said she suddenly, taking courage, and looking up at him, 'if baby had been born, he would have been just so old.'

'I know—I know, dearest,' he stammered, though he had no idea of it at all, had never even glanced at the other baby.

'Claude, let us talk of baby now,' she said. 'There must nothing more grow up between us that we cannot talk about together.'

Then at last they talked together of their hopes and grief, a sorrowful little talk for all it was so loving; till at last Lilian said, 'I have never dared to say it to you before, but——'

'But what, sweetheart?'

'But if we had done what is right, sometimes I think God would have——' She stopped. His 'It is never out of my mind,' overpowered her.

Then again she began, 'If you would only do what I wish, Claude.'

'What is it, dearest?' he asked, uncovering his face and looking up at her. 'Whatever it is, it shall be done, Lilian.'

'That makes it impossible to ask,' she replied, laying her hand very tenderly upon his arm. 'You must promise to consider—not to grant it to me just at once, before I ask it even.'

'I promise—to consider it,' he said, speaking as if his strength were nearly at an end.

Those two poor children——

'I knew it,' he groaned. 'I knew that was what you meant. But wait a little, dearest. Take time to think whether you really wish it—whether you can bear it, I mean.'

'I shall never have a child of my own now,' she pleaded. 'Let me have your children, that we may bring them up together. Claude, the world may condemn you for it. But bear that for my sake, will you not, my dearest?'

'That willingly. But not in China, Lilian. We must think of their future. Have you considered their position afterwards—known by everyone to be illegitimate, neither English nor Chinese?'

'That is why I ask you to move to England for their sakes—for the children's.' She never asked him for his own, for

his health's sake—knew already instinctively that the one hope of prolonging his life was to abstain from ever arousing any anxiety in him about himself.

And so gradually it became known that the Fortescues were leaving China, and that Claude Fortescue was retiring from the Consular Service.

He had made one more faint protest. 'But I cannot live upon your money, dearest.'

'Is that so great a sacrifice to ask?' pleaded Lilian.

Her husband sighed.

And thus it came about that he did everything he had always vowed to himself he never would do.

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## CHAPTER XL

### AT THE CLUB BAR. FINIS

Some day or other people will look on our Christianity much as we look on Paganism.—CARLYLE.

THERE was a great gathering, as there so often is in Shanghai, to see the steamer off. In the East farewells to friends rank among its greatest social gatherings, if not among its jovialities. And on this occasion, besides personal friends, and the people who almost always went down to the jetty on the chance of meeting somebody they wanted to see, several men who did not generally do so sauntered down to take a last look at the beautiful Mrs. Fortescue.

'Why, they're taking his children with them. Bless my soul!' exclaimed one man.

'I call it positively indecent,' said his wife. 'I'm glad they're going away, aren't you?' addressing herself to a lady friend. 'One could never call there with those little illegitimate children hanging about.'

'No, indeed!'

'Well, does all that lead to this?' said a student interpreter. 'If so, I stick to my Americans.'

'Right you are, my boy,' said a broker, but not the broker, alas! 'But Mrs. Fortescue must be a good woman.' And was it the wind, or was there really a suspicion of tears about his eyes?

'And what do you think of Fortescue?' asked the student interpreter defiantly.

'Oh, Fortescue's a fool,' and they both shrugged their shoulders.

'It is a regular premium upon vice, isn't it?' said a



rather over-dressed lady to our friend of the grey pongee coat. He was in another costume now, equally striking. 'I don't know where we shall all be if men are to bring up their children just as if they'd been properly married and all, and there's to be no difference.'

'Just so,' said he, who made it a rule never to disagree with a lady.

'I call it perfectly heroic of Mrs. Fortescue,' said the popular wife of a leading bank manager, with tears in her eyes. 'I only wish I thought that, if it were called for, we should all do the same.' She and her husband had married young, and they had ten children, and she no health to speak of. But she was immensely liked, and they hoped to leave China very shortly now themselves with what is there considered a fortune.

'I always told you there was something above the common about my dear Mrs. Fortescue,' replied Mrs. FitzHugh. 'But it is her husband I admire just now, though she may have the most trouble afterwards.'

'Parcel of brats!' said a silk man contemptuously.

'They'll look very different after a year or two of England,' said a fine broad-shouldered man with good features and a serious expression.

People said he was losing heavily in business, but then so was everyone who was doing any just then. The dollar continued falling, and so, alas! did Sheridans. Shanghai no longer looked forward confidently to making its fortune in Colorado, but hoped and trembled. Already there was no ready money anywhere, and the banks were inexorable.

After the steamer was off, there was a general adjourning to the Club bar. 'I say, Jerry, what do you call your new griffin?' For the autumn races were coming on now. 'I hear she is a oner. Is she entered yet?'

'I call her "Lilian,"' said the man addressed, a good-looking fellow, with rather a dare-devil expression. He had done for himself from a social point of view a few years before by, as it was believed, actually marrying a Chinese. Ladies said they could not call upon his wife, and not knowing her made it awkward to invite him to their houses. And so he had got generally left out. Men pronounced him a good fellow, but eccentric. Among themselves they commented a little upon ladies not asking him, and asking this one, and that one, and that other, who were certainly—a little notorious. 'I advise you to back her. She'll win.'

'I'll back mine against her,' cried young O'Callaghan, who was already widening out quite in proportion to his six feet three in his stockings. 'And I call mine "Fair Fortescue."' He was emphatically known as one of the rowdy lot. In the old days he would have been wrenching door-knockers. And wherever there was a row of any kind, he was sure to be mixed up in it somehow. But he had never forgotten the impression Lillian had made upon him when little Field rode his pony, and his griffin carried off the China Cup.

'I tell you what it is, you young fellows,' said Mr. Cunningham. 'I advise you to look out. We've got a new committee now, and they mean business. The Shanghai Club is to be a reformed place.'

'It isn't the young fellows who have got to look out, then,' muttered the youthful giant. But he went off rather crest-fallen, for his character for rowdiness was notorious. And after they had all spoken his praises, and not a few honest tears been shed over the old broker's funeral, the Club had taken advantage of such a very leading man being removed from among them to introduce a new *régime*. And already one old member, who had lived there and slanged the Club waiters for the last thirty years, was going round outside, begging anyone to give him a drink, because he had been suspended. And there was an awful rumour that one of the most popular of the racing lot was to be suspended that morning.

Then they all took to talking of Mr. Robinson's failure, which must be very imminent indeed, since men spoke of it; for, as they are all in business together in Shanghai, they respect one another's difficulties, and it is a point of honour not to speak of them till they are virtually all over. Then, if necessary, the subscription list goes round, and fills up easily. Shanghai piques itself on its readiness to help distress.

'I say, I didn't think Fortescue had it in him,' said the resident partner in one of the largest Bund firms to Mr. Cunningham as they walked away together.

'I expect it has cost him more than we any of us know,' said Mr. Cunningham.

'The one I'm sorry for is the boy. If he is his father's son—and he has a look of Fortescue—how will he stand it when, after a first-rate education in England, and some years of Mrs. Fortescue's tenderness, he comes back to China, and sees his real mother *as she is sure to be*?'

'Ah, well!' said the other. 'These things never quite right themselves, I suppose.'

'I believe the Chinese method is the right one,' continued Mr. Cunningham.

'Well, the dollar will go lower yet before it reaches its real value. And when it does, where shall we be then? That's what I'd like to know.'

'If a man stays long enough in China, he can't fail to be ruined. Why didn't you clear out years ago?'

'Missed my moment,' replied Mr. Cunningham, then went off repeating to himself, "'Once to every man or nation comes the moment to decide.'" Well, Fortescue has decided. I wonder, now, how often he'll regret his decision.'

As to Mr. Mortimer, who was once again in Shanghai, he simply would not go to see the Fortescues off, because he knew the children would be with them. Many people said he was growing quite peculiar, and that Chefoo even had done him no real good, after all.

'Why don't you marry, Mortimer?' someone had asked him.

'What! Bring the girl you love out to China? No, thank you. I shouldn't care for her to know all my street in England. You know all your street, and all everyone else's street too, in Shanghai.'

So, after that, there was nothing to be done but make him the butt of the winter's burlesque, when everybody took somebody off, and people laughed at the hits at one another. But this only served to confirm him in his view that China was not the place to bring the girl you loved to.

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## CHAPTER XLI

### THE NEW LIFE

Spring days are gone, and yet the grass, we see,

Unto a goodly height again hath grown.

Dear love, just so love's aftermath may be

A richer growth than e'er spring days have known.

SAMUEL WADDINGTON.

THEY are living near Cambridge now, in a quaint, old-fashioned house, with a garden full of hollyhocks and daffodils and homely English flowers. They are living upon Lilian's money, although he is Professor of Chinese, and the young men prepared by him are said to acquire Chinese afterwards with wonderful rapidity. Perhaps something of this may be owing to their always going out thoroughly grounded in George Herbert as well, for Mr. Fortescue never ceases to insist upon that writer as a model of Elizabethan English,

yet in his terseness and humour not unlike the best Chinese style. The Betterton boys have always a home to come to in the holidays now ; but the elder, who is specially seriously disposed, is already talking of going out to join his mother. For Mrs. Betterton, they all know, will never leave the West of China now that Mark, little Mark, the apple of his mother's eye, the exact counterpart of his father, lies buried outside the walls of Chungking. Susanna has been for some time past the youngest girl at Newnham College, and shows no disposition to become a missionary. Threshie Reid was certain she would not have him, though Lilian tried to encourage him by telling him even budding professors of mathematics might be wooed and won like other girls, and she believed made excellent wives, only possibly a trifle careless as to their household accounts, treating them somewhat on the  $x+y$  to the  $n$ th principle, all the figures being so uncertain. At last she had to beg her husband to request Mr. Reid either to offer or to leave the house. On which he did both, met Susanna in the road, and at once consulted her about the predicament in which he found himself, as he called it.

'Why, I thought it was all an arranged thing,' said Susanna. 'What would have been the use of my keeping up with Chinese if I were not going back there?'

'I thought—perhaps—to be a missionary,' stammered her ruddy-faced, loud-voiced wooer.

'You know I *couldn't* be a missionary,' said Susanna indignantly.

'But could you ever care for me? It is not possible, I know,' said he, sighing portentously.

'Why, you know I always have,' she replied, greatly hurt. And it was the first and last time Threshie Reid ever hurt her feelings. 'You always said I was to be your wife when I was old enough. And I've never understood anything else. But I thought I was to pass my examinations first. And I must pass first, please.'

So she is to pass her examinations first, and Threshie Reid can't yet believe they really are to be married afterwards. 'Whatever she can see in me!' he says. But some people think Susanna a lucky girl. Lilian is never quite sure about it all, only, as she says, Susanna has never thought of anything else.

But the great interest now centres in Claude Fortescue's son, who, people already say, is to cast his father quite in the shade as a Chinese scholar ; for people in Cambridge expect

great things of the lad, who is to combine Chinese and European culture, if it be possible, and, as some of them hope, altogether revolutionise China. Those who know China, the land built up upon the observance of the first commandment with promise, do not think it can be revolutionised so easily ; but they also watch the experiment with interest.

At first Claude Fortescue could not look at his children without something of the old sense of repulsion ; could not see them at Lilian's side without being half choked by an indignation against himself, that he thought all the world must share. But the boy's humble devotion to himself—a return for the many painstaking hours of instruction, that the little fellow's thirsty soul had drunk in like so much nectar—this devotion could not but win his heart by degrees. And when the children were in England, acknowledged by everyone as Claude Fortescue's children by a Chinese mother, the first agonising sense of shame began to give place to a gradually growing pride in their acquirements.

The little girl, in spite of her slanting eyes, certainly had a very decided likeness to Miss Gardiner, in which both Lilian and Claude rejoiced at times. The almond eyes were found piquant in England, whilst the Chinese taper fingers and delicately moulded arms were greatly admired, and Lilian already foresaw that the child would marry some Cambridge professor with a lively theoretical interest in race distinctions, and a complete practical ignorance of Chinese deficiencies. In that case, he would certainly get a thoroughly practical wife, who would keep her household accounts right to a farthing ; for it was amusing—if there had not been something pitiful in it—to see how already every atom of the little girl's mind was turned to what she called *real* things ; Lilian often felt as if she were being educated by her in household economy.

As to Mrs. FitzHugh, she still continues to flourish like a green bay-tree. She never quite understood the meaning of Mr. Fortescue's sending her such a very magnificent sable coat when he and Lilian first went to Peking. 'So very unseasonable a present, too, in the height of summer,' as she remarked. 'But that, too, is so like my dear Mr. Fortescue !' However, she still continues to wear it, and looks grander in it than ever. Poor little Mrs. G. J. Smith was so terrified by her violent upbraidings that she never merited anything of the kind again, but went back to Hankow, had a series of hysterics and in her turn so frightened her husband that he

became her devoted nurse, and before she got well once more, had become so used to going about with her, and taking care of her, that he never got out of the habit again. When Mr. Robinson was ruined, and died, or killed himself—there was always a mystery about the manner of his death—Mrs. Robinson, driven to support herself and Nelly, took to keeping a girls' school, which she did on a large scale Richmond way. The young ladies who come out from that establishment all marry young, and, alas! they are not improved by their residence under her care. So the world is the worse, but Mrs. Robinson is making money.

The student interpreter, of whom mention has once or twice been made, married one of Mrs. Robinson's young ladies, and then one day he shot himself. It was generally said there was no reason for the act, and people called it inexplicable. But it was one of those actions that is especially easy of explanation if people care to seek for it. His young widow not unnaturally preferred marrying again, for he left no money. And the world went on as before.

Dr. and Mrs. Berner are at last reunited, and the worthy Doctor had to submit to a severe lecture when the three tables that figured so conspicuously in his accounts turned out to be but one reading-desk. But his last literary effort proved such a pecuniary success, that he has been able to present Mrs. Berner with tables for her drawing-room out of the proceeds, and she has been propitiated. The worthy Doctor may often now be seen sauntering about, at a loss what to do with his leisure, since he no longer carries on a monumental correspondence with his wife. Talking is very much quicker, for Mrs. Berner always cuts him short when he wanders from the main subject, and does not, indeed, encourage lengthy discourses. For *she* now has letters to write—to their children. However, his socks are in perfect order, and so are all his household appointments.

Dr. Donaldson is dead long since, but by the last accounts received from him the mother of Claude Fortescue's children was the mother of a numerous offspring, and treated not unkindly by her half-Portuguese husband. All their children, when last heard of, were being brought up as members of the Church of England. She inquired, when the first was born, what Claude Fortescue's religious profession had been, and said she should like to have her children brought up in accordance with it. Her Macao husband made no objection. He had himself been trained in a Roman Catholic school, but

did not *practise*, as they say. But this request of hers looked a little as if the poor Chinese slave girl—the kitten of years ago—had had a soul all the time, if Claude Fortescue had but known where to find it, and as if in some indirect way he had yet made an impression upon it, too.

Mrs. Stuckey's interview with the Emperor of China has not yet come off; but her husband's administrative abilities are already becoming widely known. Mrs. Stuckey does not need to talk of them any longer, and there are many whispers about. Mrs. Stuckey herself has been deeply engaged upon a statue of a nursing mother; the mother is Lilian, apparently impressed for ever upon her memory during that long day she spent with her. No one who had ever seen her could fail to recognise Mrs. Fortescue's throat and the droop of her head in the mother. But the baby is modelled from Mrs. Stuckey's own baby, whose features and limbs are, she says, truly classical, thanks to her own ardent study of and impassioned admiration for the antique. It is certain the baby is rather large than otherwise, and not like either Mr. or Mrs. Stuckey, except that it inherits its father's eyes, which, now that they see them in a baby face, undimmed by liver, people see are the eyes of an idealist—eyes that might see visions.

'Of course Mr. Stuckey is an idealist,' says his wife. 'How could he ever deal with figures as he does if he were not? But no one notices this, because he observes every detail. Nothing can escape him. And he acts at once, quite silently. He will never be appreciated at his real worth. But his work will be, though people may not always know it is his.'

The women's hospital at Chungking is built now, built with Lilian's money. It is her one gift to China, to which she had at one time, somewhat sadly, meant to dedicate herself. Mrs. Betterton says it will be very useful. Mrs. Betterton writes always full of hopefulness, her trust in God ever unshaken, only longing a little more for heaven now that her husband and little Mark are both gone on before. Her letters to Lilian are always full of a great tenderness, and the receiving of them is a real joy to Lilian, who has never known what it is to have a mother, and who now often feels almost as if she were her mother. Certainly, Mrs. Betterton is the nearest approach to one that Lilian has ever known; whilst Mr. Fortescue often says of her she is the one real missionary it has been his chance to meet. There may be many others like her, he says, but she is the only one that

ever crossed his path. His great book on Taoism is not completed yet, and when it is, he doubts if it will find as many readers as it has taken him years to write. But scholars are already looking forward to it, and as some one said, referring to its advent, 'One grain of unadulterated truth added to the world's store is well worth a man's life.' There is also every prospect of its being intelligible, for although so highly esteemed as a Sinologue, Claude Fortescue's English is pellucid.

Untroubled, tenderly loved, surrounded by every comfort England can give him—there are some, he occasionally maintains, only to be had in China—his weak heart has long ago ceased to trouble him; and though it still exists, a possible source of danger, there is every prospect of a long and happy life of usefulness before him.

'How very much Mrs. Fortescue's face would seem to say she has suffered!' people say sometimes.

But then some one is sure to look up surprised, and say, 'Why, her face is like a psalm. It gives the idea of peace—the peace that passeth all understanding.'

Both, perhaps, are right, and Mrs. Betterton was wrong. They were not only very happy together at first, though whether Lilian's life has been spoiled or not is another question. Sometimes as the sun shines brightly—as it does sometimes even in England on a summer afternoon—there comes a shadow over her face, and her eyes gain that far-away look they used so often to wear. For a moment she sees the precipices of the Bellows Gorge, and the great river far away below like a fearsome pool, and she hears the chant of the trackers, the chant that always sounded so merry till then, when she saw that last tracker's face as he tried to disengage himself, but failed—and fell! Then, as that memory presses back over her, she shudders and looks sad.

But her husband's hand rests gently on her shoulder, and her husband's voice says tenderly, 'Are you among the rocks and rapids of the Yangtze, my darling?'

Then she looks up into his face, and tries to smile, as she says, 'Yes, among the rocks and rapids.' And she remembers his face as it looked that day in the Niukan Gorge. And then, both thinking of what might have been, their hearts are full of a deep thankfulness.

THE END.









